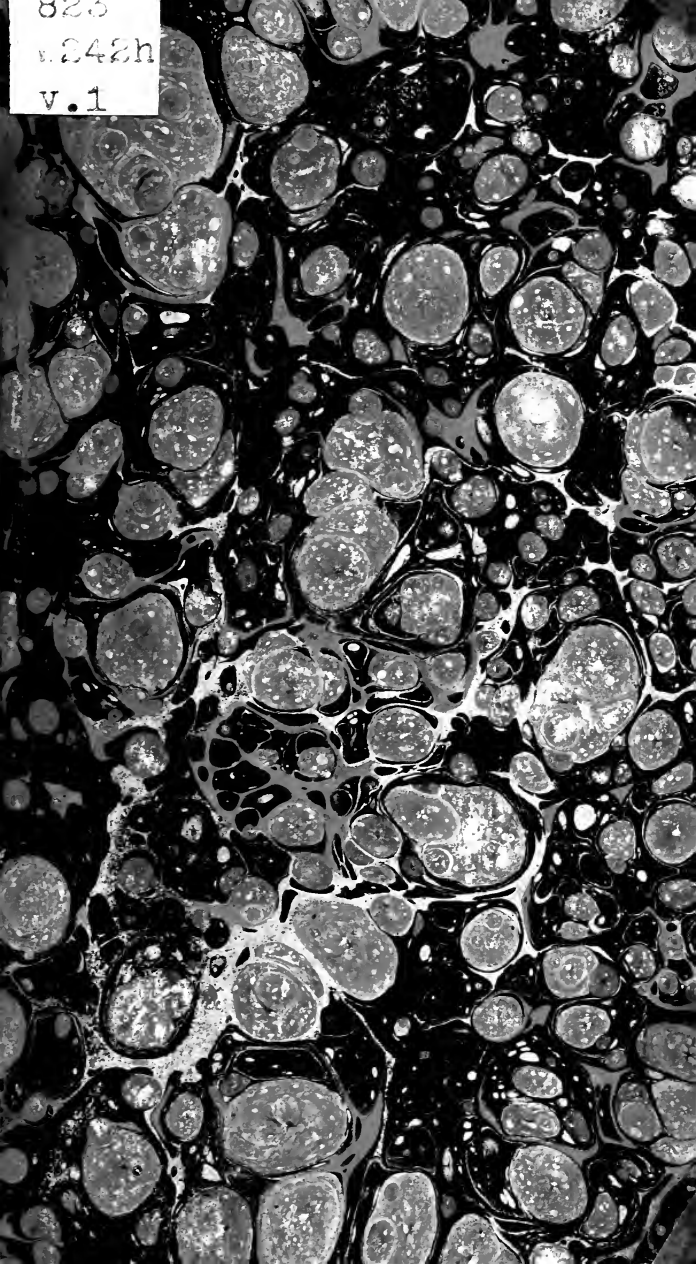


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# HERBERT-LODGE;

A

## *NEW-FOREST STORY.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

MISS WARNER,

OF BATH.

---

VOL. I.

---

“ Know, we are bound to cast the minds of youth  
“ Betimes into the mould of heavenly truth,  
“ That taught of God, they may indeed be wise,  
“ Nor, ignorantly wandering, miss the skies.”

COWPER.

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## PREFACE.

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**I**F purity of motive might be expected to atone for defective execution, the Authoress of the following sheets, would feel no painful apprehensions on submitting them to the notice of the public.

Conscious that she had been actuated by principles, which the benevolent must applaud, and even the wise could not disapprove, she should

*Genl Res England*

dismiss her work to the ordeal of popular judgment, if not with confidence, at least with none of that distressing anxiety, which she at present experiences.

But, alas ! aware as she is, that the stern impartiality of criticism must not be expected to soften its decisions in compliment to the *secret* motives of those upon whose productions it pronounces its verdict ; she has nothing to lessen that alarm, which an unobtrusive character may be supposed to feel, on assuming a position so conspicuous, as that in which she has now placed herself.

She knows that the public, to whose sentence her volumes are submitted,

is not to be influenced in its decrees by the *private* circumstances of those who *voluntarily* appear at its tribunal; and, therefore, were she even to urge the work had been undertaken that she might be the better enabled to solace the latter days of an aged and infirm parent, (the dear *recollection* of whom is all that *now* remains to her;) that the greater part of it had been written in the season of trial and affliction, or amidst hurry and inconvenience; when she was attending the bed of a declining mother, or hanging in trembling fear (the reasonableness of which, a late mournful event has too fatally manifested) over the sick couch of an only sister; she still would

have no right to hope that the representation would ward off censure where it was deserved, palliate the defects of composition, or make amends for the absence of novelty and interest.

With all its imperfections, therefore, on its head, she is compelled to submit her *New-Forest Story* to the world, under emotions, which sensibility will readily understand, and which generosity will instinctively commiserate.

Amidst, however, the various feelings which agitate her mind, at the moment when she bids a final farewell to the volumes that have so long engaged her occasional attention; she thinks it her duty to declare, that GRATITUDE to the Friends whose names appear in the

respectable list of her Subscribers, is the paramount emotion; and that as the protection which they have afforded her, has been her chief encouragement under the task in which she had engaged, so the recollection of their favours will ever remain deeply engraven on her heart.

Their patronage, she has indeed, in some degree, striven to deserve, by endeavouring to make her volumes the medium of mental improvement, and moral and religious instruction; and under all the anxiety that fills her bosom, it is some consolation to her to reflect, that, however deficient they may be in the graces of diction, and the ornaments of genius, she is still

enabled to flatter herself, they will be found to have a tendency to give steadfastness to piety, ardour to virtue, and confidence to truth.

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# HERBERT-LODGE.

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## CHAPTER I.

MRS. Herbert had been nearly twelve months separated from her children, when the approach of summer renewed that hope of clasping them again to her bosom, in which, at the preceding vacation, she had been disappointed, by her husband's insisting that Edmund and Matilda should pass the Christmas recess with their aunt and uncle at Fitzmordaunt-Castle.

No intelligence to the contrary having yet reached the Lodge, Mrs. Herbert

with anxious solicitude awaited the arrival of these dear objects of her maternal affection; nor was the delight with which Mary anticipated the long-wished-for return of her play-fellows, less ardent than that of their tender and expecting mother.

The cultivation of Edmund's little garden, which ever since their separation had been the constant care and principal amusement of Mary, was now attended to with double diligence. Trained by her hand, his favourite plants and shrubs, already began to bloom; and rewarded her assiduity by their fragrance and beauty. "See, mamma, how these lilacs blossom. Smell how sweet these hyacinths are. Will not Edmund be charmed with the improvement in his jessamine bower?" were remarks and enquiries daily made by this interesting child of simplicity and innocence. Juba, the petted spaniel of Edmund, was the faithful

companion of her labours; he attended her in all her walks without doors, slept on a cushion at her feet when within, and shared her kindness equally with a canary-bird, which Matilda had entrusted to her care.

These marks of genuine sensibility, and strong attachment to her absent friends, rendered the lovely orphan daily more dear to Mrs. Herbert; who deeming no pursuit too trifling to occupy Mary's attention, which in the most remote degree tended to foster the benevolent affections, readily entered into all her little plans; encouraged her in every undertaking which had the happiness or pleasure of another for its object; and at Mary's request cheerfully assisted in arranging the play-room, and ornamenting the apartments of her children.

Never before had time appeared to Mary to move so tardily as during the present period of anxious expectation;

even Mrs Herbert, disciplined as her feelings were, and frequently as she had experienced the necessity of curbing them, could not on this occasion repress, though she endeavoured to conceal, her impatience.

The wished-for day at length arrived: Edmund was already in his mother's arms; and Mary held his hands in hers, whilst her eyes were directed to the door in anxious search of his sister. Mrs. Herbert pressed the blooming boy to her throbbing bosom, and breathed over him a prayer of thanksgiving for his safe return; then loosing him from her embrace, and presenting him to receive the ready welcome of his adopted sister, "and now my love," she cried, "where is your companion? where is my sweet Matilda?"

Alas! the fond mother's bitter cup of disappointment and sorrow was not yet full: instead of being accompanied by



his sister, Edmund, she found, was charged with the following letter from Mr. Herbert.

“ Your brother and Lady Antoinette have been hastily summoned to France; I have consented to their united request that Matilda should accompany them, and cannot allow myself to doubt of your concurrence in a plan, which a moment’s consideration will convince you must be greatly advantageous to the child. Lady Antoinette is, as you know, highly accomplished; she promises to superintend the education of Matilda, who, with such an assistant, and in a country, where ease, elegance, grace, and fashion, are, as it were, the natural produce of the soil, she cannot fail to make a rapid progress in every desirable acquirement. Matilda’s beauty improves daily, and when heightened by the brilliant polish of a French education, I think we shall have no reason

to be ashamed of our daughter. This scheme has been hastily decided on, and time not permitting me to apprise you of it, Lady Antoinette obligingly undertakes to direct every necessary preparation. I shall accompany the party as far as ———, and probably continue on the Continent for some months. We quit town to-morrow, so that Matilda can only *send* you a parting adieu. I at first intended taking Edmund (who will deliver this to you) abroad with me, but being undecided as to my own movements, and the length of my stay, I thought I might find him a troublesome incumbrance, and determined on sending him to pass the holidays at the Lodge. He is a fine boy, but wants spirit; neither is his genius so quick as Matilda's. He has not yet entirely rubbed off the New-Forest rust; but time and the collision of a public school may still do much in refining and improving him, and correct

the ruinous effects of your absurd system of domestic petticoat education.

“ Yours, J. HERBERT.”

It would be difficult to describe the emotions of Mrs. Herbert's soul on perusing the above letter. Her maternal feelings had been wrought up to the utmost height by the prospect of immediate gratification; when in an instant hope and expectation were annihilated by the cruel intelligence that Matilda was irrevocably torn from her protecting bosom. That sickness of the heart arising from “hope deferred,” which she had before experienced, was enjoyment when compared with the anguish that now wrung her soul. In an agony bordering on despair, she clasped her hands, and lifting her eyes to heaven, sank back into a chair; a deadly paleness overspread her cheek, her pulse ceased

to beat, and for a moment she lost the acuteness of her suffering, in the torpor of insensibility. It was, however, but for a moment. The cries of the children awakened her to life and recollection; and when on again opening her eyes, she perceived the distress that marked their features, when she saw the tears trickling down their cheeks, and heard their artless expressions of joy at her restoration, her bosom heaved with convulsive throbs, and throwing her arms round Mary and her darling Edmund, she burst into a passionate but salutary flood of tears.

The door was at this instant opened by Dr. Fairford, whose animated countenance lost much of its characteristic cheerfulness as he advanced towards the weeping group, with an intention to enquire the cause of so much apparent distress. That the children were expected at the Lodge on that day he had already

known, and the purport of his present visit was to welcome their arrival; but seeing only Mary and Edmund in the room with Mrs. Herbert, it immediately occurred to him, that some fatal accident had happened to Matilda, and interested as he felt himself in all the family concerns, it was not without hesitation that he pronounced her name. Edmund, gently disengaging himself from his mother's embrace, sprang into the arms of the excellent Doctor, who received him with the most cordial affection, and listened with surprize not unmingled with deep concern, whilst he explained the occasion of his sister's absence.

Mrs. Herbert, having in some degree recovered the first shock of this most distressing disappointment, kissed the still weeping Mary, and requesting that she would accompany Edmund into the dining-parlour, related to her venerable friend, with all the warmth natural to the

irritated state of her feelings, the cruel mortification she had just experienced.

Dr. Fairford, with his usual serenity, recommended moderation in grief, and patience under suffering. “Alas! dear sir,” interrupted the afflicted mother, “you have witnessed, I hope, that where *my own* welfare only was concerned, I could be resigned, patient, and even cheerful under disappointment: but in this case, where the present advantage of my child, perhaps even her eternal happiness, is at stake, how can I be calm? How can I palliate the cruel conduct of that father, who has thus robbed me of my child? When I contemplate Matilda under the guardianship and direction of the unprincipled Lady Antoinette Fitzmordaunt; as listening to her counsels, and imitating her example; placed beyond the reach of maternal care; in a foreign land, amongst unfeeling strangers; no warning voice to

guard her young heart from evil impressions; no kind adviser to shield her from the seduction of false sentiment, and the delusion of vanity; no friend sufficiently interested to watch over the gradual developement of her yet uninformed mind, or attend to the preservation of her health; separated, perhaps for ever, from me her natural guardian, her only protector under heaven;—Oh, Doctor! how can I contemplate this picture, and not sink beneath its horrors.”

‘ My dear Mrs. Herbert,’ replied the Doctor, whilst he tenderly pressed her hand, ‘ let me entreat you to be composed, and allow your excellent understanding to correct the frightful representation of imaginary evils, which you have sketched in the moment of poignant disappointment. Of these alarming consequences of Mr. Herbert’s hasty, and I must say injudicious plan, which you have so feelingly described, I really can

see neither the certainty, nor indeed probability. It is true that neither the country to which Matilda is taken, nor the protectress under whom she is placed, are such as we could have chosen for the purposes of education or example ; but you will recollect, that, from the capriciousness of Mr. Herbert's mind, and the unsteadiness of his determination, it is very likely the child may ere long be again returned to her native country and her former instructress. In the interval she will be acquiring, in the best manner, a language which is now considered as essential in the accomplishments of every gentlewoman ; and you cannot have so mean an opinion of the influence of your own good example,' added he smiling, ' as to be apprehensive that in so short a time it should lose its effect upon your daughter, and not keep her steady to those excellent principles which you have so carefully



instilled into her mind, and so uniformly displayed in your own conduct. However, (he continued in a graver tone,) whatever may be the result of this unlooked for change in your views respecting Matilda, all that we have to do, my dear friend, is to bear it with Christian fortitude. Consider it in the worst point of view, and what is it but one of those trials which are kindly intended by the Being who sends them, for our eventual benefit. It has pleased Him to accumulate upon you many of these exercises of patience; and certain I am, that under every sorrow which has befallen you, your piety has always extracted a blessing from the infliction, and induced you after a while to exclaim, ‘it is good for me that I have been in trouble.’ Let patience then, my excellent friend, have its perfect work; bend with humble resignation to the decree of Him, who is infinitely wise as well as infinitely bene-

volent; and assure yourself, that in this, as well as every other case, He will make all things work together for good to them who trust in Him. Accept with gratitude the blessing He has just bestowed upon you in giving to your embrace your lovely boy, and forget those painful reflections which past and present disappointments may excite, in the anticipation of brighter scenes and happier days in future.'

In the hope of witnessing the salutary effects of his advice, Dr. Fairford accepted an invitation to dine at the Lodge; and in the afternoon, with the benevolent view of still more effectually diverting Mrs. Herbert's thoughts from the sad subject with which he perceived they were yet too much occupied, he proposed that she should accompany the children and himself on a visit to Dame Wheatley at the Dairy; in which he was eagerly seconded by Mary and Edmund, who

declared they should not enjoy their promised syllabub, if deprived of the company of their dear mamma.

Mrs. Herbert, whose own pleasure was always estimated by the proportion of it which she conferred upon others, immediately acceded to their united request, and the party were preparing to set out in the coach for the old woman's cottage, when Dr. Fairford received a summons to attend a dying parishioner. This was an application to which the conscientious rector never returned a negative. With him the professional duties of a Minister of the Gospel were never superseded by unnecessary or trivial engagements; assuring Mrs. Herbert, therefore, that no circumstance of less importance should have deprived him of the pleasure of accompanying her and the children to the Dairy, he took leave of his disappointed friend, and hastened to smooth the pillow of dissolution.

" Beside the bed, where parting life was laid,  
 " And sorrow, guilt, and pain, by turns dismay'd,  
 " The reverend champion stood ; at his controul,  
 " Despair and anguish fled the guilty soul,  
 " Comfort came down the trembling wretch to raise,  
 " And his last faltering accents whispered praise."

Meanwhile Mrs. Herbert and her companions proceeded to Dame Wheatley's residence, where they were received with that affectionate hospitality which is the genuine offspring of goodness of heart united with simplicity of manners.

The obligations of Mary to the benevolence and care of this worthy old woman had been early and deeply impressed upon her mind ; and she always anticipated a visit to the Dairy with the purest satisfaction. The sentiments of Edmund accorded in general with those of his adopted sister ; he loved and respected Dame Wheatley therefore as much for Mary's sake, as for the warmth and sincerity of attachment which she displayed towards himself ; an affection

inferior only to that which her heart acknowledged for Mrs. Herbert, whose excellence she almost regarded with idolatry.

Nothing seemed wanting to complete the Dame's happiness on the present occasion, but the addition of Matilda's company, whose absence she most feelingly regretted, not unmixed with some reflections on the squire's cruelty in "banishing such a pretty creature to foreign parts abroad, amongst heathens and savages for aught she knew; though to be certain, she had heard there were some few Christian folk even in France, though it were so far off; and she hoped with all her heart that young miss would light amongst them."

Mrs. Herbert, whose heart was still agitated by every maternal fear on her child's account, faintly smiled at the simplicity of the Dame's observations, which had been expressed with eyes full

of tears, and turned the conversation to less interesting subjects, enquiring into the particulars of her tenant's household. The improvement of her grand-daughter, and dutiful behaviour of her son, were themes on which the old woman could ever expatiate with fluency and delight; and as she had an auditor who listened with an attention at once flattering and sincere, the hour of departure arrived before it was either expected or desired by the hospitable occupier of the Dairy. As Mrs. Herbert however had promised the children a walk home through the forest, she was under the necessity of hastening her return earlier than she otherwise would have done; and having bade a kind adieu to Dame Wheatley, she called Mary and Edmund, who were amusing themselves with gathering flowers in the court, and turned her steps towards the Lodge.

It was one of the finest evenings in the delightful month of June: nature had assumed the richness of a summer's dress: every object seemed to breathe tranquillity on Mrs. Herbert's wounded spirit, and returning strength to her exhausted frame. Whilst she rested for a few minutes on a fallen oak, to inhale the balmy fragrance that floated on the air, the children, having spied some wild roses at a little distance, requested they might be allowed to ramble about a little in search of the flowers which enamelled the ground on every side, promising not to go out of hearing, and to return by a limited time. As it was her greatest delight to indulge them in every innocent wish, she immediately assented to their desire, only begging John Wheatley (who was attending the party home) to see that they did not get into any situation of danger. Away they bounded light as roes, whilst Mrs.

Herbert, who watched their sylph-like forms gradually lessening by distance, breathed a prayer for the safety of her beloved Matilda, who was now so far removed from the watchful eye of maternal tenderness.

The evening breeze was mild and refreshing. The setting sun appeared at intervals through the waving branches of the tall beech, whose tops were gilded by his parting rays. A gentle zephyr whispered through the surrounding foliage, and gave additional effect to the soft notes of a turtle-dove, who cooed in mournful cadence from the bosom of a neighbouring wood. An holy calm reigned on every side, which seemed to invite the mind to seriousness and meditation. It was the scene imagined by the poet for the intellectual feast of thoughtful wisdom : who

“ Oft seeks the sweet retired Solitude,

“ Where, with her best nurse Contemplation,



“ She plumes her feathers and lets grow her wings,  
 “ That in the various bustle of resort,  
 “ Were all—too ruffled and sometimes impair’d.”

From meditating on the heavenly scene around her, Mrs. Herbert was led by easy associations to those times of peace and happiness which she had enjoyed in “ the days of other years;” in the gay season of childhood, when no corroding cares disturbed the tranquillity of her bosom; no painful retrospections of the past, or gloomy anticipations of the future, broke in upon her waking hours, or dissipated her nightly slumbers; when

“ Gay hope was hers, by fancy fed,  
 “ Less pleasing if possess’d;  
 “ The tear forgot as soon as shed,  
 “ The sunshine of the breast.”

She reverted with grateful recollection to that revered and lamented parent, who had been the guide and protectress of her infant years, and the instructress of

her early mind; whose affection had been evinced by countless acts of kindness, the memory of which was still dear to her heart; to whose invaluable lessons of piety and virtue she was indebted for the fortitude that had supported her under every trial; for the resignation that had lightened every sorrow. She dwelt also with a melancholy pleasure on the remembrance of that beloved brother, who had been her earliest companion, and the dearest partner of all her innocent pleasures, but over whose untimely fate hung an awful mystery, which her mind could not contemplate without the most painful suspense. The image of Fairford too would for a moment intrude itself into the picture, which her fancy now portrayed; but she threw on it only an hasty and a transient glance: from the instant she had become the wife of another, Mrs. Herbert had striven, and success-

fully striven, to banish every too tender recollection of the once-loved Frederic from her heart; so that his idea, when it did occur, became at each successive recurrence fainter and more faint, until it now appeared like the shade of a deservedly valued but long-departed friend. On Henry's form, however, on Henry's virtues, she might dwell without reproof or impropriety. No rigid law of duty forbade her to cherish a *brother's* image in her inmost heart; nor could censure itself reprehend the tear that fell in fond regret for his irreparable loss! Neither time, nor distance, nor the indistinct communications she had received of his fate, could weaken his claim upon her affection; and in the present moment of abstraction, the idea of this tender relative presented itself to her thoughts in the most vivid colours. In that sweet delusion with which fancy delights to cheat the mind, when its attention is deeply

engrossed by one particular object, Mrs. Herbert again seemed to behold his graceful figure and animated countenance; and heard again his last adieu. Again, in imagination, she listened to his voice, and folded him to an affectionate sister's bosom! She did not, however, long enjoy this feast of ideal happiness, but was quickly awakened to real alarm by the loud barking of Juba, and a shrill cry from Mary, whom in the same instant, she beheld running towards her, pale and breathless.

Starting from her seat, Mrs. Herbert hastily advanced to meet the child, and in a tone of anxious solicitude, eagerly enquired, "what had happened?"

"Oh, mamma! he's dead, he's killed," cried the little girl, with looks of wild affright. "Dead?" exclaimed Mrs. Herbert, whose maternal fears naturally referred the words to Edmund; and without waiting for further information, in-

stantly rushed into the thicket. She had not proceeded many paces, however, before her most alarming apprehensions were relieved, by the sight of Edmund himself, who was hastening towards her apparently unhurt. “ Thanks be to heaven, my beloved boy, that my fears were groundless,” she cried, as she clasped him to her throbbing bosom; “ but what is the meaning of this alarm and distress?”

Edmund, more composed than his little companion, proceeded to inform his mother, that as Mary and himself were busy in collecting plants and flowers, they had seen a gentleman at some distance on horseback; that as he approached them, his horse had started at a deer which crossed his road, and thrown his rider on the stump of a pollard, where he was lying, motionless, and he believed dead. “ John,” added the little boy, “ said he would stay by

the gentleman, if we would go and ask you what was to be done; so whilst I went to the brook to get some water in my hat to wash the poor man's temples, Mary ran forwards to find you. But why, Mary, did you frighten mamma, by making her think that I was hurt?"

"I did not mean to frighten her, indeed," replied Mary, "but I was so frightened myself, that I did not know what I said."

"You are not to blame, my sweet love," said Mrs. Herbert, kissing her; "may you, my dear children, be never less alive to the sweet feelings of compassion and humanity, than you have shewn yourselves this evening. But let us hasten to administer what relief we can to this unfortunate person." Thus saying, she struck into the path pointed out by the children, and soon saw, a little before her, a man of genteel appearance just rising from the ground, and supported by the servant's arm.

His head was inclined towards the ground, and his face turned from Mrs. Herbert, who approached him quickly, and in a voice of compassionate sweetness and kind solicitude, expressed her “hope that he had not received any material injury from the accident.”

‘Merciful Providence!’ exclaimed the stranger, as he threw his glance towards the speaker, ‘that well-known voice! I cannot be deceived! No, it is indeed my Caroline!’

“Henry, my dear, my long-lost Henry!” faintly articulated Mrs. Herbert, and in a moment found herself encircled by the arms of that affectionate brother, whom she had been taught to consider as for ever lost.

To describe the feelings by which her bosom was agitated at this unlooked-for meeting, is not within the power of language: they were too tumultuous for description, too mixed for definition.—

As soon however as they had subsided sufficiently to allow her fully to comprehend the extent of her happiness, she lifted her heart and eye to heaven in grateful praise for the event, and tenderly embracing her brother, assured him of the inexpressible joy which she experienced at this un hoped-for blessing; calling at the same time to the children, who stood fixed in silent wonder at the scene, to run to their uncle and welcome his return.

Henry took Mary and Edmund alternately in his arms, and as he kissed their rosy cheeks, while the tears coursed each other down his own, Mrs. Herbert had leisure to mark the alteration in that countenance, which in happier days had beamed with the animated glow of youth, and health, and ardent hope. His eye had lost its lustre, his face was pale and emaciated, and wore the marks of sickness and of sorrow. But the expression of sweetness, which had been reflected



upon his countenance from his mind, still remained: his impassioned manner, his affectionate sensibility, were still the same: the well-known tone of his melodious voice could not be mistaken, it spoke at once to her heart, awakening a thousand painful and dangerous associations; associations which it required all the self-command of Mrs. Herbert to endure without agonising emotion.

The evening was now fast closing, and John, whose absence had not before been noticed, presently appeared with intelligence that "the carriage waited at the edge of the wood;" which this faithful creature had run to the Lodge to order, the moment he discovered who the stranger was. Henry gladly availed himself of this conveyance, as violent pain and loss of blood had rendered him incapable of again mounting his horse, which was found quietly grazing in the neighbourhood of the accident. When

they arrived at the Lodge, Mrs. Herbert immediately dispatched a messenger for medical assistance, from the adjacent town; and having seen her brother laid upon a sofa in a darkened room, she left him to repose, retiring into her chamber to tranquillize her own bosom after the interesting adventure which had just befallen her.

On examining his patient, Mr. — pronounced the contusion on his head to be a slight one, but that his pulse indicated a degree of feverish irritability which required the utmost quiet; and having bled him copiously, and given the necessary directions, he quitted the Lodge, with a promise of returning early on the following day.

When alone with his sister, Henry seemed desirous of entering into some explanation of the circumstances which had led to his unexpected appearance in the forest; but the strong emotions which

agitated his debilitated frame whilst attempting the task, excited such alarming apprehensions for his safety in Mrs. Herbert, as induced her peremptorily to insist on his silence in this respect, though her bosom throbbed with the most anxious curiosity to be made acquainted with the particulars of his history. She entreated, therefore, that he would defer all explanation till he should be more equal to the exertion, and recommended in the mean time, a strict attention to the directions of Mr. —, from whose medical skill, she flattered herself with every hope of his speedy restoration.

“ Ah, my dear Caroline,” returned Henry, “ the skill of Mr. — may relieve my bodily pain, but who shall administer to a *mind* diseased?” His agonized look, the heart-piercing tone of his voice, and the emotion with which he uttered these words, entirely over-

powered the sensibility of Mrs. Herbert, who, unable longer to support herself, sunk on her knees beside the sofa, whilst the long-suppressed tear fell fast upon the feverish hand of Henry, which pressed his sister's with a convulsive force.

For a moment both were silent; at length, "I see I distress you, my dear Caroline," resumed Henry, "and I acknowledge I am much to blame; yet when you know what I have endured—But will not *you* also disown the wretched Henry?" 'Disown thee! dearest, earliest friend of my heart! No, witness for me, heaven, that the image of my brother has never, from the first moment of our separation, been absent from my mind.' "Then," replied Henry, "am I not entirely bereaved. O, teach me, Father of mercy, to be grateful for thy goodness, in thus pouring upon my festered spirit the cordial drop of a sister's affection to soothe those sorrows which can

never be removed. And you also," he added, after a pause, "you also, my dearest Caroline, have suffered by the same hand which blasted all my peace! Yet *you* have comforts in your *children*, which I can never know. Edmund indeed is a noble boy—but his unworthy father——" 'Is my *husband*, Henry.' "True, true, my sister! But, ah! how little does he merit that sacred name. Alas! unfortunate, ill-requited Fairford!" 'Brother!' cried Mrs. Herbert, in an impressive tone. "Forgive me," returned Henry, "forgive the ravings of a wretch, whose feelings have been tortured even to madness! Great heaven, does there exist in nature such another villain as him, who with more than dæmon's rage has thus contrived to ruin all our hope of happiness? Oh, Caroline, when I contemplate you as the victim of his cruelty, and recollect also that by his machinations *I* have been deprived

of all my soul held dear, my love, my wife, my promised offspring!" convulsive sobs prevented further utterance: oppressed by the violence of his feelings, Henry sunk into his sister's arms, and wept aloud.

It was some time before Mrs. Herbert succeeded in her efforts to calm the agitated spirits of her unfortunate brother; and when at length, soothed by her tender sympathy, he seemed to be in some degree composed, in order to prevent his mind from reverting to the agonizing recollection of his own sufferings, she told him, that, if agreeable to him, she would relate the incidents which had occurred to herself during the long period of their separation from each other; exacting in return a recital of his own story, as soon as his strength was sufficiently restored to enable him to communicate it without danger to his health. Henry gratefully accepted

her offer, and Mrs. Herbert commenced her history, but as from fear of wounding the irritable feelings of her auditor, she suppressed many distressing circumstances, and only slightly sketched others, which we consider of sufficient interest to lay before our readers, we must request their attention to a few pages of retrospection, whilst we trace the fortunes of this amiable woman from her birth to the present time.

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## CHAPTER II.

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**S**IR Gilbert Fitzmordaunt, the father of Mrs. Herbert, had, rather at an advanced period of life, married a very young lady, of exquisite beauty, but of birth and fortune far inferior to his own. Nor did either the talents or acquirements of Miss Morton at all equal her personal attractions. Her disposition, however, was amiable, her temper serene, her manners gentle; and although an humble education had denied her many of those advantages, which might



have added lustre to that rank in which she was placed by her marriage with Sir Gilbert, yet neither malice nor envy could discover any blemish in the character or conduct of the lovely Lady Fitzmordaunt.

Confident of possessing the undivided affection of a husband, whom she sincerely loved: surrounded by all that affluence could bestow; she for a time believed her happiness must be as lasting as she felt it to be complete; nor was it till after the birth of a little girl, that Lady Fitzmordaunt perceived in Sir Gilbert's neglect of the infant, and coldness towards herself, on how capricious and unreasonable a being that felicity depended, of which she had flattered herself she was so secure.

By this baronet, who traced a long line of ancestry back to Norman times, a son, a male heir, through whom his name, his manors, and hereditary ho-

nours should be transmitted to posterity, was an acquisition indispensable to his happiness; and a disappointment in this point was considered by him as a misfortune of such magnitude as no other advantages could compensate.

Lady Fitzmordaunt was most painfully affected by the undisguised chagrin of a husband, to ensure whose felicity she would gladly have made any sacrifice. To anticipate his wishes had ever been her study; to conform to his opinions, her invariable rule. It is not surprising, therefore, that she should insensibly adopt his sentiments on this subject, and without losing the feelings of a fond and affectionate mother, sometimes feel regret that her infant had not been of the sex most agreeable to the inclinations of Sir Gilbert.

In the course of two years her Ladyship's situation gave rise to the hope that the fond wishes of Sir Gilbert might at

length be gratified. During this period of expectation, the small-pox proved fatal to the little girl. The mother's grief upon the occasion was sincere and poignant; but the only observation that escaped the lips of Sir Gilbert, was, "Thank heaven, I have not lost a son." It will therefore be easily imagined that his joy was unbounded, when, on returning from a successful election, which had detained him several weeks from home, he found Lady Fitzmordaunt nearly recovered from her confinement, and folded to his bosom the heir he had so anxiously desired.

The birth of this precious gift of heaven, was celebrated through the manor with every mark of rejoicing and festivity; and a large circle of elegant guests within the castle, partook of all the luxuries that money could purchase, and of every entertainment which taste could suggest.

Lady Fitzmordaunt, indeed, did not appear to enter into these amusements with a spirit and satisfaction equal to Sir Gilbert's; but her languor and indifference were naturally enough attributed by those who remarked them, to the usual effects of her present situation; and the greater number of the guests were far too busily employed in amusing themselves, to be very anxious or very curious about the feelings of others.

For more than two years the little Charles (for such was his name) remained the sole darling of the family; idolized by his father, and caressed by every dependent who sought to recommend himself to Sir Gilbert's notice. Lest his temper should be hurt by contradiction, every whim was ordered to be gratified as soon as expressed. Caprices multiplied with encouragement; and an ill judged uninterrupted indulgence sowed the seeds of every corrupt and

fatal passion, in that period of childhood when the ductile mind is most capable of receiving indelible impressions.

Lady Fitzmordaunt saw the danger of this conduct, but her attempts to check it were vain. Her own education, indeed, had been plain and simple, but it had given her that knowledge which is most useful for the conduct of life. She had been early taught, and experience also had confirmed the remark, that ornamental acquirements are of less importance than good dispositions, and that the improvement of the mind consists in the regulation of the passions, in the establishment of virtuous habits, and in the cultivation of the rational powers, rather than in the attainment of languages, or the acquisition of polite accomplishments. She secretly grieved to observe that Charles, unused to controul, or impatient of any hesitation in complying with his wishes, every day

increased in selfishness and ill-humour; whilst, on the other hand, his doating father regarded him with fresh delight, considering his bursts of passion as indications of spirit, and his perverseness and obstinacy as certain prognostics of manly firmness.

Shortly after Charles had completed his second year, Lady Fitzmordaunt became the mother of twins; and as little Henry and his sister Caroline were presented to their father to receive his paternal blessing, she smilingly observed, that ‘although one of them happened unfortunately to be a *female*, she still hoped they would be equal sharers in Sir Gilbert’s affection.’

The baronet coldly embracing the little innocents, replied with indifference, “my anxieties in that respect, my love, were relieved on the birth of our elder son. While *he* is preserved to me, I shall feel no solicitude as to the sex of

another child. I already contemplate in *him* the spirited heir to my title, the liberal possessor of my estates, and the worthy representative of my ancient house; and can consequently regard any other addition to our family with only a secondary affection."

'*Secondary*, Sir Gilbert; these sweet babes only secondary;' replied Lady Fitzmordaunt, pressing the infants to her bosom. 'Indeed, if you would listen to me patiently, I *could* convince you—I *could* give such reasons why Charles—'

"You never loved him," hastily interrupted the Baronet; "I have frequently suspected it; I have often seen it." Lady Fitzmordaunt made an effort to speak, but he continued; "If, however, you love *me*, Harriet, (she tenderly pressed his hand,) remember, that the child who possesses my affections, should be as dear to you as to myself."

As the children advanced in years, it became evident that the partialities of their parents operated in different directions.

Lady Fitzmordaunt's preference for the twins could not be mistaken; which, though it was condemned by many of her friends, yet found some excuse in the opinion of others, from their superior claims to affection, as well as the injustice of Sir Gilbert in entirely neglecting them, whilst he lavished the most extravagant marks of fondness on the elder boy.

Thus were the seeds of family discord sown, and the foundation laid of all the evils which occurred to them in subsequent life. Indulged and encouraged in every caprice by his father; flattered by the servants, and contradicted only by Lady Fitzmordaunt; the young heir early lost all filial regard for his mother, and affection for the twins, whom he consi-



dered as his rivals in her tenderness. He soon became the little tyrant of the nursery, where his principal pleasure was derived from disturbing the peace of the younger children by destroying their play-things; whilst out of doors he delighted himself with inflicting tortures on insects, or teasing any animals that came in his way. It was to this season of life that the formation of Charles's future character might be traced. It was now that his mind imbibed those principles of a disposition imperious, selfish, and vindictive, which afterwards became a curse to himself, and the source of unhappiness to all connected with him.

Henry and his sister in the mean time, under the attentive eye of their mother, grew up with every valuable trait of character. Mild and gentle herself, she instilled into their bosoms all the softer virtues. By a constant endeavour to

prevent all unnecessary occasions of irritation, she guarded them from peevishness or passion. By denying them no proper indulgence, and uniformly refusing to grant any that was otherwise, she at once ensured their affection, and planted the germ of a satisfied and contented disposition. It required, indeed, all her vigilance and discretion to counteract the dangerous example of their violent and self-willed brother, and the injudicious conduct of Sir Gilbert, who was ever loud in his praises of Charles, and frequently drew mortifying comparisons between that *spirited* lad, and the *sheepish* dulness of his brother and sister. But a steady and consistent conduct in herself, added to an unremitting attention to the cultivation of all the amiable dispositions of the mind, secured the children from any dangerous impressions, and formed in them habits of piety and virtue.

As the young people advanced in life, the *effects* of the different systems under which they had been early educated, were strikingly displayed. Charles and Henry were sent to Westminster and the University, where the former became the terror of those over whom he had any power; hated or scorned by his equals; prodigal when his own gratification was the object, mean where self-indulgence was not concerned; insensible to every humane feeling or compassionate emotion, and destitute of every generous and truly honourable principle.

Henry, on the contrary, enjoyed the sincerest attachment of his fellow-students. His heart glowed with generosity and affection. He freely shared with his school-mates the presents occasionally received from his mother; assisted them in their exercises; and often took upon himself the punishment of another's fault. His little purse was open to the

call of distress, and his heart melted at the tale of woe.

When Charles had completed his twentieth year, a relation of Sir Gilbert's, having occasion to pass some months on the Continent, invited the young men to accompany him, and the long vacation having just commenced, the baronet made no objection to the proposal. During their absence, Lady Fitzmordaunt was attacked by a slight indisposition, for which the Bath waters were prescribed. To this place of fashionable resort, Caroline accompanied her mother, where they expected to be joined by Sir Gilbert, as soon as he had transacted some business which detained him in town. But the pleasure which Caroline had anticipated from the novelty of the scene, and the benefit Lady Fitzmordaunt had expected from the salubrious springs, were alike disappointed; for they had scarcely recovered from the fatigue of

their journey, when an express arrived with the alarming intelligence, that Sir Gilbert had been seized with a dangerous illness, and earnestly desired the immediate attendance of his wife and daughter.

The summons was instantly obeyed ; but though she travelled with all possible diligence, Lady Fitzmordaunt arrived only in time to receive the last sigh and farewell look of her dying husband. The illness of Sir Gilbert had been a paralytic seizure, which from the first excited apprehensions of a fatal termination. Being conscious of his danger, he made several efforts both to write and dictate a will, but his characters were unintelligible, and his words inarticulate ; he died therefore intestate, leaving Henry and Caroline almost wholly dependent on the young heir.

The death of Sir Gilbert was a circumstance very highly distressing to his widow. She fondly loved her husband ;

and in one of those delusions of the imagination which affection is so apt to create, she persuaded herself that if she had not quitted him, her watchful tenderness might have warded off the dreadful stroke; and prolonged a life so valuable to herself, and so important to her darling children. She saw herself reduced in a moment from a state of affluence to a very slender jointure, and (which was still more afflictive to her) Henry and his sister deprived of all expectation of further provision than her own trifling fortune of one thousand pounds, (settled at her marriage upon the younger children;) and thus placed in a state of dependence on one who had never shared her affections, and who certainly merited neither her confidence nor esteem.

From this period grief seemed to take entire possession of Lady Fitzmordaunt's mind. She gradually sunk into a state

of the deepest dejection, and her health, which had previously been delicate, now visibly and rapidly declined.

The sudden and unexpected death of Sir Gilbert seemed for a time, to have made some favourable impressions upon the heart of the young baronet, who, with his brother, had been recalled from the Continent on this mournful occasion. Towards Henry and Caroline, his conduct and expressions were, if not affectionate, at least less haughty than before; and the external marks of respect which he seemed disposed to pay to Lady Fitzmordaunt, might have been construed into a desire of attempting to conciliate her regard, and to atone for past misconduct. She received, however, all his advances with coldness, and was evidently pained even by his society. Her languor and melancholy daily increased; some secret sorrow seemed to weigh down her spirits, which undermined her consti-

tution, and at length produced complaints that baffled all the efforts of the faculty to remove.

In a few months Clifton was prescribed as a last resource for the deep decline which now preyed upon the vitals of Lady Fitzmordaunt, whither she removed accompanied by Caroline. In a few days the symptoms prognosticated a speedy termination of her sorrows and sufferings; and being made acquainted with her situation, she expressed an earnest desire immediately to see her sons. Henry obeyed the summons with mournful eagerness; while Sir Charles appeared to be perfectly indifferent to the event of a journey, which, however, he could not with any degree of decency refuse to undertake. On their arrival, which had been impatiently expected by Caroline, she threw herself into Henry's arms, while tears of anguish gushed from her eyes, and exclaimed, "Alas! my brothers, I fear it is too late ;



our beloved mother—" ' Is Lady Fitzmordaunt dead?' interrupted Sir Charles; whilst Henry in silent grief pressed his sister to his bosom. "She is not dead," resumed Caroline, "but from her sudden starts, and incoherent wanderings, it is evident her *reason* is disturbed. Her mind seems to be heavily oppressed by some hidden cause of agitation. *Your* name is often repeated by her, Sir Charles; but the sentences are so unconnected, that I have never been able distinctly to understand the purport of them. Yet I think that you—" ' Do you mean to insinuate that I am the *cause* as well as the *subject* of her ravings;' said Sir Charles fiercely: ' she never loved me as a mother; how then could she expect from me the respect and affection of a son?'

"For heaven's sake," said Henry, "recur not now to what is passed. Let us mutually strive to soothe our dying

parent, instead of embittering her last moments by reviving animosities which ought to be buried in eternal oblivion." At this moment a servant entering to inform them that Lady Fitzmordaunt requested their immediate attendance, the brothers followed Caroline in silence to her room.

Sir Charles and Henry approached the death-bed of their mother with very painful but very opposite emotions. Although pale and emaciated, the countenance of Lady Fitzmordaunt still retained traces of its former beauty; and Henry discovered in it the most affecting picture of maternal tenderness; whilst his brother, on the contrary, conscious how little he merited her love, fancied that he read in the expression of her languid yet lovely features, only bitter reproaches for his past undutiful conduct.

As they drew nearer to the bed, Lady Fitzmordaunt gazed on each with wild

affright. A slight hectic for a moment tinged her cheeks, and was as suddenly succeeded by a pallid hue, which seemed to be the prelude of death.—Henry pressed her hand, and bathed it with his tears; when seeming to awaken to recollection, she looked on him with transport, attempted to raise herself from the pillow, and stretched forth her arms, as if to clasp him in her bosom. But the effort was ineffectual, she sunk back exhausted, faintly murmuring—“ My son, my darling *only* son!” Henry gently supported his dying parent, and bending forward, tenderly kissed her parched lips, whilst her eyes were still fixed wistfully on his face, and his hand was locked within her own.

“ And am I to be a *cypher* here?” said Sir Charles, in a tone of anger and mortification. At the sound of his voice, Lady Fitzmordaunt started; but he continued, “ Has your *eldest* child no claim

upon your justice or your love? Is Charles entirely forgotten?" 'Away! away!' cried Lady Fitzmordaunt, with a look full of horror, and in a tone of agony. 'My soul is tortured by the recollection;—it cannot be—Charles, you are no child of mine!' "How have I merited this cruel treatment?" returned Sir Charles, with indignation.—A violent hysterical seizure prevented her reply, and obliged the young men to resign their parent to the care of the attendants, whilst they retired to an adjoining chamber, where the baronet sat in sullen silence, whilst Henry endeavoured to soothe the affliction of his sister, and inspire her with fortitude in this hour of trial.

They had remained in this situation a considerable time, when a message came to Sir Charles, that Lady Fitzmordaunt, finding herself restored to perfect composure, requested to see him *alone*. He

seemed surprized at the summons, and reluctantly followed the messenger.

Henry and his sister sat for some time impatiently waiting either his return, or a message for them also to go to their mother; but nearly an hour having elapsed, and nothing transpired from the sick room, they stole softly to the door of the apartment, and quietly opening it, entreated to be admitted. Sir Charles, however, made a sign for them not to enter, and stepping forwards, said, in a whisper to Henry, “ Let us not be interrupted; I have a long account to settle, much to ask forgiveness for; and would willingly make my peace with my parent before I bid her a last adieu.”

Mournfully retiring from the door, Henry and his sister passed another half hour in anxious suspense, but at length unable longer to endure this banishment from their expiring parent, they again opened the door of her chamber, and

abruptly, but without noise, entered the room. Sir Charles, who was pacing it in the utmost agitation, turned pale as death at their intrusion, and casting a fierce and inquisitive glance towards the bed, rushed hastily by them, and retired without speaking.

Already the cold damps of death hung on the brow of Lady Fitzmordaunt. Her glazed eyes sought in vain to distinguish the objects near her. Her lips moved, but speech was denied. Caroline and Henry dropped on their knees beside the bed, and grasping the clay-cold hands of their beloved parent, hung over her in deep but silent sorrow. An attendant offered some restoratives, but it was too late. Nature was exhausted. Every moment she breathed with greater difficulty, and before midnight ceased to breathe at all.

The grief of Henry and his sister was truly “a sorrow of the soul.” They

loved their mother with the truest filial affection, the grateful return of uninterrupted maternal tenderness. Their father's death had afflicted them, but the grief they then felt was light when compared with their present anguish. The magnitude of their loss seemed wholly to occupy their minds, and left no room for the subordinate consideration of the forlorn and destitute situation to which they were now reduced; till the haughty behaviour of Sir Charles awakened them to all the horrors of dependence, and convinced them, that however deeply they had been afflicted by the loss of their lamented parent, that affliction was still capable of increase from the unnatural conduct of their only surviving protector.

Scarcely were the remains of the late Lady Fitzmordaunt committed to the tomb, when Sir Charles, throwing off all restraint, appeared as the proud tyrant

of his little household. To Henry his behaviour became daily more cold, distant, and imperious. He not unfrequently hinted the impropriety of his return to Oxford, as a situation of expence ill-suited to the fortune of a younger brother; and at length, though not without some expressions of affected regret at his inability to provide for him more eligibly, proposed to procure for him a subordinate situation in one of the public offices.

Sir Charles had anticipated the effects which such an offer as this would produce. The spirit of Henry revolted from any obligation bestowed by one who seemed so little inclined to consult his delicacy as a man, or his feelings as a brother; and having, through the interest of a friend of his mother's, obtained a pair of colours in the ——— regiment, then on foreign service, he resolved to find for himself a path to independence. Bound to his sister by



the ties of kindred virtues, as well as of natural affection, he would gladly have rescued *her* also from this cruel bondage; but he had his own fortune to seek, and could bestow nothing on Caroline, as he bade her adieu, but fervent ineffectual wishes for some happier lot.

Miss Fitzmordaunt, though as noble-minded, amiable, and ingenuous, as her twin-brother, felt however less keenly than him the bitterness of dependence; which indeed would seldom have occurred to her mind, had it not too often been pressed upon her recollection by the capricious conduct of the unfeeling baronet. Occasionally, perhaps, he seemed disposed to behave to *her*, if not with affection, at least with less arrogance than had marked his conduct to Henry; but these flashes of softness in his manner were transient and infrequent, and seemed to be wrung from him by the uniform sweetness of her disposition,

rather than any kind sensibilities in his own heart.

Still, however, Caroline, artless and innocent herself, was, with the natural hilarity of youth, disposed to enjoy the sweets of a life in which she was just entering, instead of seeking its bitters, and submitted without repining to her fate; endeavouring with grateful solicitude to cultivate the affection of Sir Charles, who daily seized some opportunity of magnifying the obligations with which he favoured her. The loss of Henry's society was a severe drawback upon her little sum of happiness; but she strove to conceal the regret she felt at his departure, lest it should be understood as a reproach for that harshness which had driven him an exile from his home; and though many were the tears of sorrow which she shed in silent solitude over his absence, yet she dressed her

features in their sweetest smiles, whenever Sir Charles appeared.

But though she was aware that her brother possessed the power and had too much the inclination, to render her situation uncomfortable, she had as yet no idea that he could make her miserable. She had yet to learn how far his cruelty extended.

A splendid entertainment had been long planned for the celebration of the day on which Sir Charles Fitzmordaunt attained his one and twentieth year. The guests were numerous, and Caroline exerted herself to do honour to the festival. Youth and innocence disposed her to enjoy the mirthful scene. The gaiety of her heart shone in her expressive features. Never had she appeared more enchantingly lovely. Even Sir Charles, relaxing from his frigid dignity, condescended to compliment her on her

appearance, in warmer terms than she had before heard escape from his lips.

Caroline felt gratified by her brother's approbation, and received the general homage paid to her charms with ingenuous pleasure, but without expressing or evincing the most distant degree of vanity or affectation; nor when Sir Charles introduced to her particular notice, the handsomest and most elegant man in the room, did she consider it as a circumstance of sufficient importance, either to increase her present gratification, or to influence in the slightest way her future happiness. The pointed manner of its introduction lost its intended effect, by escaping her notice; neither did she remark the significant expression of the baronet's features, when, on naming Mr. Herbert as his highly-valued friend, he bade her remember that he should estimate her desire to please himself, by the compla-

cency with which she received the attentions of his guest.

This was a sufficient inducement to Caroline to endeavour to render herself agreeable to Mr. Herbert; an endeavour in which indeed she was but too successful. He solicited the honour of her hand in the dance, an accomplishment in which he eminently excelled. Every movement of Caroline's was ease and grace, and animated by the novelty of the occasion, she shone with more than common lustre. Herbert, who was formed for scenes like these, caught additional inspiration from the charms of his lovely partner. They were of course admired by the company, and Sir Charles secretly hoped they equally admired each other. But the animation of Caroline was the natural effusion of an innocent and cheerful heart; whilst that of her partner arose from a combination of

feelings, of which her pure mind was entirely ignorant.

Herbert's vanity, the prominent feature of his character, immediately interpreted Miss Fitzmordaunt's ready compliance with her brother's directions for the regulation of her behaviour towards him, into a sudden prepossession in his own favour. Presuming on this opinion, which he did not hesitate to believe was fully justified by his transcendant merit, he gradually assumed such an air of confidence when addressing her, and poured such torrents of compliments into her ear, that Caroline, displeased and disgusted at a conduct which she considered rather as an affront to her understanding than a tribute to her charms, secretly but earnestly wished, when they separated at the conclusion of the evening, she might never be so unfortunate as to meet with him again.

Sir Charles, on the contrary, who had attentively observed both, remarked with infinite satisfaction the favourable impression made by his sister on the heart of his friend; and though he did not draw exactly the same inference from the invariable sweetness of her manner towards Herbert, as he himself had done, yet not having been able to discover in Caroline's behaviour, any symptoms of disapprobation, he was very far from suspecting her real sentiments on the subject; and congratulated himself on the success of a plan, which his earnest desire of being freed from the incumbrance of Caroline had often suggested to his mind. His disappointment and chagrin was extreme therefore, when on the following morning, whilst talking with his sister on the events of the preceding day, he enquired her opinion of Mr. Herbert, and found it to be in direct opposition to his hopes and expectations.

She had not intended indeed to have hazarded offending the baronet by naming his friend at all; but called upon as she was for her sentiments of him, she could not deny that she had thought him vain, presumptuous, and superficial.

“ He is extremely *handsome*, Caroline.” ‘ Perhaps so; but in my opinion, not equally agreeable.’ “ He is universally considered as elegant and fashionable; indeed as the perfect model of a finished gentleman.” ‘ True, Sir Charles, but the fine polish of his manners renders him too brilliant for my sober taste; and I confess, that what greater connoisseurs in the science of good breeding might perhaps consider as easy elegance, appears to me to be downright impertinence.’ “ You are witty at the expence of candour;” returned the baronet, with a frown which made his sister tremble. “ This is the first time I have heard Herbert mentioned in any



other terms than those of the warmest approbation. However," added he in a more conciliatory tone, "when you have seen more of him, I doubt not that you will find reason to alter your opinion."

From this period Mr. Herbert became a constant visiter at the Castle, nor could Caroline long remain ignorant that *she* was the magnet which drew him thither. Time, however, failed to verify Sir Charles's prediction. The dislike she had conceived at her first meeting with him, was rather increased than diminished by the opportunities she now had of more nearly observing his character and disposition; and her behaviour to him in consequence of it assumed daily more distance and reserve. But no coldness of manner could check the pretensions of one, who felt persuaded that he was irresistible; and who attributed Miss Fitzmordaunt's change of behaviour to modest diffidence, and the natural em-

barrassment of a young and delicate mind under the influence of a first passion.

Distressed by his obstinate attentions, and desirous of avoiding such a painful persecution, Caroline had determined to request Sir Charles's interference on her behalf, when she was prevented by his informing her one morning, that "*his friend* Herbert had made her the offer of his hand and fortune; an *honour* of which he had pledged himself she would accept."

Astonishment and horror prevented Miss Fitzmordaunt from making an immediate answer; and the baronet, availing himself of her silence, proceeded to descant on the merits of the gentleman, his taste, accomplishments, and fortune; and concluded with congratulating her on the peculiar good fortune of having attracted the notice of a man, so much the envy of the gay world, and who

might at any time command the hands of women of infinitely greater pretensions than a girl in her dependent situation. “ But Herbert is a noble fellow. He swears that with him money is no object. That you are handsome as an Houri; and he would prefer you, though pennyless, to an empress that could not boast your charms.”

A flood of tears having in some measure relieved the painful tumults which the first communication of this intelligence occasioned in the bosom of Caroline, she addressed her brother, and in the most gentle accents entreated he would convey her thanks to Mr. Herbert, but at the same time inform him, she must absolutely decline the honour of his proposals.

“ Decline his proposals!” repeated the baronet, with a contracted brow; “ impossible! my word is passed, and by heaven, you *must* marry my friend.”—

‘ Ah! my dear brother,’ resumed Caroline, ‘ revoke, I beseech you, that terrible sentence: condemn me not to a fate so *cruel*!’ “ A *cruel* fate do you call it, to be the star of fashion, the admiration of the beau monde, the envy of your sex? To be sure, child, you who have not a thousand pounds in the world, have a great right to complain of *cruelty* when offered the command of ten thousand a year.” ‘ The cruelty of my fate,’ dear Sir Charles, would not certainly consist,’ replied Caroline, endeavouring to force a smile through her tears, ‘ in the circumstances you mention. I do not pretend to a stoicism which despises the advantages of fortune; I object only to the terrible *incumbrance*, which in the present case is attached to them.’ “ Your sprightliness is ill-timed;” said the baronet peevishly, “ I am serious.” ‘ Then dear brother, allow me *seriously* to assure you, that I feel I never shall be able to

conquer my aversion to the person in question.' " Young ladies attachments and aversions are so very flexible, Caroline, and change so much with changing circumstances, that I have no hesitation in saying, you will hereafter *thank* me for having *insisted* at present (and I do very peremptorily *insist*) on your receiving the addresses of my friend."

The door at this instant opened, and Herbert himself entered the room. " Apropos," said Sir Charles, " you are just arrived in time, Jack, to be your own advocate. I have broken the ice for you, and have no doubt that Caroline (looking sternly at her) will entertain a just sense of the high compliment paid to our family by your proffered alliance." ' Am I then likely to be so happy? May I hope for the honour of Miss Fitzmordaunt's good opinion?' said Herbert, throwing himself on a sofa opposite to a large pier-glass, which conveniently re-

flected his handsome figure. Sir Charles was silent; and Caroline, for a moment, incapable of utterance. Having however recovered herself, and assumed a degree of composure foreign to her heart, she thanked him politely for the compliment intended her, of which she begged him to believe she was fully sensible, but at the same time hoped he would not, on an occasion in which her own happiness was so deeply concerned, think her too explicit, when she assured him, she never *could*—she never *would*, accede to his proposal. ‘Upon my honour, this is most incomprehensible.’ said Mr. Herbert, throwing his eye from the glass to Sir Charles. “By heaven,” cried the baronet quickly, whilst passion flushed his face, “mere coyness and caprice; her *heart* belies her declaration.” ‘Is it so, my angel?’ returned the conceited lover; ‘let me at least indulge the dear delusion, that Herbert

will not find you inexorable to his vows. In the mean time, Sir Charles, as a pressing engagement tears me from the charmer of my soul, let me commit my cause to *your* direction. You have a *chart-blanche*; bless me with your sister's hand. She must, she shall be happy; and Herbert and his bride be equally the envy and the admiration of every splendid circle.' So saying, he arose from the sofa, and in spite of all Caroline's efforts to prevent it, imprinted a kiss on her hand, smiled, bowed, and quitted the apartment.

"You cannot mean," said the indignant girl, as Herbert closed the door, "to unite me to that presuming, vain, unfeeling coxcomb! you will not surely condemn your sister to so much wretchedness! Ah, why do you wish to drive me from you? Why force me to become the wife of a man I must despise?" Fitzmordaunt paused for a moment in

seeming irresolution; and Caroline considering his silence as a favourable omen, sunk on her knee before him. Seizing his hand, she bathed it with her tears, and in the most pathetic terms described the misery that must inevitably follow an union so entirely repugnant to her inclinations. “ Oblige me not to make this sacrifice of all my earthly happiness, my dear brother. Suffer me only to remain in my present situation, which I wish not to change. By the memory of our revered parents, I solemnly conjure you—” ‘ Name them not,’ interrupted Fitzmordaunt, furiously, whilst his face grew pale, and his lips quivered, ‘ Name them not, I charge you; with *me* their memory will avail nothing. My *promise* is given, my *honour* is engaged. You *must* become the wife of Herbert, or lose my favour and protection for ever.’ With these words he tore himself from Caroline,



who still grasped his hand in hers, and rushed from the room, leaving his unfortunate sister in a state of agitation little short of distraction.

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## CHAPTER III.

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**W**ITH fine features, a good figure, a tolerable understanding, and polished manners, Mr. Herbert possessed also a large estate, and the reputation of liberality of sentiment, and generosity of principle. He was, however, a coxcomb in behaviour, and a libertine in heart; vain and insensible, though elegant and accomplished; mean and selfish, though profuse and expensive.

As the most lovely girl he had ever seen, Miss Fitzmordaunt attracted his attention: but the impression which her

charms made on his heart would not have induced him to offer her his hand, had not his vanity been roused by the admiration which he found she excited in others.

Sir Charles's beautiful sister was the subject of every polite circle. The men swore she was an angel ; and the ladies strove in vain to depreciate a loveliness that was so universally acknowledged. Stimulated by these circumstances, Herbert resolved to possess himself of a prize which should at once excite the envy of both sexes ; and confident as he felt of his own merits, he doubted not that he should obtain the hand of Miss Fitzmordaunt with the same ease that he might add a new horse to his stud, or a fresh varnish to his curricie. On the turf, and in the ring, he had already been eminently conspicuous. Herbert's racers and equipages, the spirit of his bets, and the punctuality of his *honour-*

*able* engagements, had long been spoken of with eclat. He now panted for fame in another character, and with the same feelings which would have accompanied the pursuit of any other whim, he determined on paying his addresses to Caroline Fitzmordaunt.

It unfortunately happened, however, that during the period of their very short acquaintance, the lady had discovered more to dislike than to approve in the various qualifications of her lover. Although no disciple of Lavater, she yet possessed a sort of intuitive skill in physiognomy that compelled her to shrink with disgust from the expression of features, which, though handsome, indicated a heart degenerate and corrupt. His skill in music also was highly extolled; but to Caroline's taste, his science was unnatural refinement, and his manner insupportable affectation. In her estimation, his ready smile was artificial

grimace; his elegant compliments, hyperbolical flights; and his easy air, disgusting confidence. She considered him, in short, as a character in which *nature* had no share; where every look, word, and gesture were studied to produce effect, and challenge applause.

Independently, however, of these causes of dislike, Caroline's heart owned another motive for rejecting the addresses of Mr. Herbert: a tender preference already occupied it, which shut out all other claimants on its affections.

Frederick Fairford, the son of a clergyman, had been the schoolfellow and early friend of Henry Fitzmordaunt, with whom he usually passed a part of each vacation at Fitzmordaunt-Castle. This close intimacy between her favourite brother and young Fairford had naturally interested Caroline in his favour, though the sentiment she yet cherished for him was not distinguishable from

sisterly regard. After the death of her parents, she saw less of Frederick, who, except on *her* account, would never have endured the chilling reception, which he met with from the haughty baronet. But though they met less frequently, each succeeding interview became still more interesting than the former. Some latent excellence, some estimable point of character which she had before neglected to discern, now presented itself to her observation. The sentiments connected with Frederick in her bosom assumed each day a tenderer character; and childish friendship rapidly matured into the most sincere and pure affection.

Fairford, whose temper was generous, whose heart was uncorrupted, had from the first moment of reflection, remarked and admired the charms of Miss Fitzmordaunt. The beauty of her person, however, would not alone have captivated him, had they been unaccompanied with those graces

of the mind by which she was so eminently distinguished. The sweetness that beamed in her dark hazle eye, the blush that tinged her cheek with the native hue of sensibility, the intelligence which illuminated every feature of her animated countenance, the charms of her conversation, and the innocent naiveté of her manners; it was these which converted a boyish preference into ardent love, and confirmed in the bosom of Fairford an enthusiastic passion for Miss Fitzmordaunt, to which he gave the most uncontrouled indulgence, without once considering the little probability of its being crowned with success.

On the evening of the birth-day fete, Frederick was awakened from his dream of happiness. He observed Mr. Herbert's pointed attentions to Caroline, and though jealousy made no part of his character, he could not observe them with indifference. He saw also the

pleasure with which they were encouraged by Sir Charles ; and the torturing fears which this ominous circumstance suggested, were in the course of the evening confirmed by the baronet, who purposely seized an opportunity of hinting to him the views he had formed ; artfully adding, that as a sincere friend of the family, he felt persuaded of Mr. Fairford's gratulation on this prospect of his sister's eligible establishment in life.

Frederick's chagrin could only be equalled by his surprize at this intimation. Caroline the wife of another ! was an idea which had never yet presented itself to his mind ; nor did he immediately feel capable of clearly comprehending the possibility of such an event ; but on recalling his scattered senses, he was naturally led to a more close investigation of his own claims to that felicity, to which he had thoughtlessly, and, as he now believed, pre-



sumptuously aspired. He drew a comparison between the birth and expectations of Caroline and himself, and could not but confess that the situation to which a marriage with Mr. Herbert would elevate her, was more suitable to her than the humble fate to which she must have been consigned, by an union with himself. Honour forbade him to blast the fair prospects of the woman he adored, by clandestinely soliciting her affection; and Sir Charles had unequivocally, tho' indirectly given him to understand, that he must not hope for his approbation, or sanction to his pretensions. From this fatal evening, therefore, he resolved that the passion which glowed in his bosom with unabated ardour, should be buried in eternal silence. But the task of concealment was, he found, more difficult than he had expected; and when on meeting the eyes of Caroline he fancied they expressed the tender sentiment

which in reality dwelt in her innocent bosom, his heart turned cold at giving her reason to believe, he was either insensible to the power of her charms, or ungrateful for the preference which she entertained for him; and it required all the united power of reason and generosity, and every argument of his father, who was the friend of his inmost thoughts, to prevent him from disclosing the passion which she had excited in his breast.

Whilst this conflict was passing in the breast of Fairford, Caroline, ignorant of the maxims of worldly prudence, and unconscious of the sacrifices which are daily offered to the shrine of Mammon, saw no obstacle to oppose her future union with a youth to whom she had already given all her heart. In every plan which her fancy had sketched of domestic felicity, Fairford still was the principal figure on the canvass. Her attachment was a principle of the soul,

it had “grown with her growth, and strengthened with her strength;” it therefore is not surprizing that she should consider her brother’s command to accept the proposals of Mr. Herbert, as a sentence which at once destroyed every prospect of worldly felicity. Whatever measures the deepest anguish could suggest to avert the dreaded evil, she tried, but tried in vain ; tears and intreaties, remonstrances and prayers, were equally ineffectual to soften the inflexible mind of Sir Charles. He had resolved on the match, and opposition served only to confirm his resolution.

Herbert also, piqued by a reluctance which he did not expect to find, now considered Caroline as a necessary sacrifice to his *vanity*. The world was not to know that he could be *refused*. To shield himself therefore from the mortification of a defeat, he pursued his addresses with a persevering ardour,

that bore some resemblance to a real passion.

Caroline, shrinking with horror from the dreadful fate preparing for her, looked round in hopeless sorrow for some means of escaping its infliction. There were indeed moments in which she meditated flight; but alas! to whom could she direct her steps? The fond and tender mother, who would joyfully have clasped the persecuted child to her own protecting bosom, was now no more! Her favourite and affectionate Henry had sailed for India many months before. Fairford!—but on him she durst not turn her thoughts. He had never in words disclosed the state of his heart, and it was possible that his speaking looks, his thousand soft attentions, which she had considered as the silent expressions of delicate love, proceeded only from a long and faithful friendship.

Fairford, indeed, had seen her reluctance to accept Mr. Herbert, and feeling himself unable longer to endure the torturing trials to which he was daily exposed, he at length yielded to his father's advice, and tore himself from the neighbourhood of the Castle; leaving the woman for whom he would freely have sacrificed his life, in ignorance of the noble motives which influenced his conduct. This desertion at such an eventful period confirmed Caroline in her opinion, and she blushed with the deepened hue of offended delicacy, at the idea of having indulged a tender preference for one, whose behaviour now proved that he had ever thought of her with indifference.

In the mean time Mr. Herbert, resolved not to be foiled in his plan, became daily more urgent in his suit. Sir Charles also threatened to discard his sister entirely from his heart and presence, unless she yielded to the joint wish of himself

and friend. The only pittance she could call her own was still in his possession; which, insufficient as it might be for her maintenance, she still would have wanted courage to demand. Other friends than her brother she now had none. Her *acquaintance* indeed were numerous, but from them she could not hope even for a sanction of her refusing to become the wife of Herbert.

The younger females considered his proposals as a ground of envy; and every matron within the circle of her knowledge, had given her to understand, how highly they thought her honoured by his notice; how *fortunate* she might consider herself on the prospect of such an eligible establishment.

Thus harassed incessantly by her brother and her lover, destitute of resource and advice, Miss Fitzmordaunt at length felt herself compelled to yield in the unequal struggle; and suffered them to

wring from her a sorrowful and reluctant consent.

Having once determined on becoming the wife of Mr. Herbert, she called to her aid the early lessons of piety and resignation which her excellent mother had instilled into her mind. She reflected also on the increased means which the situation she was entering into would afford her, of indulging the benevolence of her heart. With the natural ardour of a youthful imagination, she dwelt on the various opportunities she should then enjoy, of relieving distress, and dispensing comfort. She beheld misery and want retiring from the lowly cottage at her approach; and whilst the aged and infirm were cheered by her charitable assistance, she imagined herself encouraging industry, and diffusing knowledge, amongst the younger children of poverty.

Fortified by these considerations, which seemed to convert the sacrifice of her

own inclinations into an act of duty, in which the welfare of many others was concerned, she acquired firmness sufficient to accompany Sir Charles and Mr. Herbert to the altar. But here the support she expected from her previous resolutions failed. When called upon to promise love and obedience to a man whose manners she disliked, whose character she could not esteem, the colour faded from her cheeks; in a voice tremulous and almost inarticulate, she pronounced her vows, and at the conclusion of the ceremony sank fainting into her husband's arms.

The first winter after their marriage was passed by Mr. and Mrs. Herbert in London amidst all the gaiety of fashion, and all the splendour of wealth; during which period the vanity that had influenced his choice was fully gratified, by the admiration which universally followed



Herbert's *beautiful* wife, whenever she appeared.

The murmur of applause that buzzed through the drawing-room on her being presented at Court, the compliments of gratulation poured into his ears from all quarters, the ill-disguised envy of the females, and the rapturous encomiums lavishly bestowed on his lovely partner by the other sex, were so many causes of triumph to the exulting bridegroom; who felt inexpressible delight from the general confession of his possessing the finest woman in the world of fashion.

In compliance with the inclinations of her husband, Mrs. Herbert mingled indeed in all the various scenes of high-life pleasure which he adored, and where only he was calculated to shine: but she “trode the mazes of folly’s circle” with heaviness and secret loathing, although no word or look marked her disappro-

bation. With the purest satisfaction therefore, on the approach of the season when fashion's arbitrary sceptre points to change of situation, she heard her husband's determination of passing the summer at Herbert-Lodge. It was in the quiet seclusion of this retreat, that Mrs. Herbert expected to realize those pleasures, the anticipation of which had contributed to reconcile her to this ill-assorted marriage. *Here* the various plans she had formed for the exercise of her benevolence were to be executed. *Here* also, in the unrestrained intercourse of domestic privacy she hoped the character of her husband would more fully develope itself, and disclose some traits of virtue which had been obscured by the parade, or silenced by the bustle, of a town life.

But alas ! the wished-for removal to the shades of the New-Forest produced but little addition to the comfort of Mrs.

Herbert. No change of situation improved the character of Herbert in her opinion. Too soon she discovered that their sentiments were not more accordant amid the rural scene, than in the gay circles of the metropolis. The beautiful and diversified picture of nature which the Lodge afforded, and which his amiable wife contemplated with delight, were only beheld by Herbert with disgust and ennui. His heart, if such a being may be said to possess a heart, vibrated only to the touch of artificial pleasure. His taste was vitiated, and his mind corrupted by an early formed and unrestrained indulgence in habits of dissipation. The beauty of Mrs. Herbert's person, no longer recommended by the charm of novelty, ceased to attract his notice; and to the loveliness of her mind and the excellencies of her heart he was alike insensible and indifferent. Even the natural feelings of a parent

could keep alive in his bosom only a transient interest for a beautiful boy, of which Mrs. Herbert became the mother during the period of their retirement. He languished for the return of winter, which would again open to him the sources of all the enjoyments he was capable of tasting; when he again expected to see his wife take the lead in the throng of fashion, and to hear his own happy fate the theme of every party.

But here disappointment awaited him as severe as it was unexpected. Lady Charlotte Brilliant, a new meteor, had appeared in the hemisphere of the beau monde, to eclipse the charms which had before demanded universal admiration; and to snatch the wreath of beauty from the brow of Mrs. Herbert.

Severely did his wounded vanity suffer by this mortifying change; nor, though he found it impossible to prevent his wife from sinking quietly and willingly

into the unobserved crowd of matrons, could he reconcile his own feelings to the shock of ranking with the dull assemblage of old married men!

To avert this dreaded evil, and still preserve his claim to notoriety, he plunged more deeply into fashionable excess. Mr. and Mrs. Herbert were seen in every circle of gaiety, and their house was converted into the very temple of dissipation; his dinners became more frequent, his parties more crowded, and their balls more splendid.

It was with the sincerest regret that Mrs. Herbert marked this ruinous progress. She had, it is true, estimated, in a degree, the character of her husband from the commencement of their acquaintance, and was fully aware of his incapacity to enjoy the gentle felicities of domestic life; but she had not believed, she could not have imagined, that he was so lost to every virtuous

sentiment, or capable of such gross libertinism, as she now perceived him to be devoted to.

His total neglect of herself she could have borne with uncomplaining resignation; but she shuddered with horror when she reflected that her children (for she was now in expectation of a second confinement) might suffer both in their morals and future fortunes by his example and extravagance. Yet no hint, either by word or look that could be construed into reproach, was ever allowed to escape her.

With compassion, such as angels feel for erring mortals, she strove to win him to the love of virtue by example rather than reproof. From the moment she became a wife, she determined to fulfil, to the best of her ability, the several duties of the character she then assumed; one of the principal of which she believed to be an endeavour to promote

her husband's happiness. With this view she had sacrificed her own inclination for retirement, to accommodate to his habits as far as regarded the mere frivolity of a fashionable life; and even now that he was plunged into scenes of dissipation, in which she could have no share, she studiously adopted every means of rendering his home agreeable to him, whenever he devoted an hour to it. His absence for days and weeks never drew from her an expression of resentment; and his return was invariably welcomed with a smile.

But the cold and selfish heart of Herbert was not to be so softened. The amiable forbearance of the suffering Caroline did not indeed escape his observation, but he observed it with displeasure. Her virtues were a tacit reproach on his own licentiousness, which both provoked and pained him. Had she occasionally upbraided him, he would

have been better able to excuse to himself the ill-humour with which he frequently behaved towards her, when losses at play, or other disappointments, had soured his temper and sent him home dissatisfied and unhappy. But he could not endure the perpetual sight of a monitor, who, though silent, he well knew was not insensible, and between whose conduct and his own he was aware the better judging world would institute a comparison neither to his honour or advantage. He now execrated the folly that had urged him to shackle himself, so early in life, with the galling yoke of matrimony, and take for a companion one whose sentiments and propensities were so opposite to his own. In each fair form that met his eye, he discovered charms to rival those which he had formerly professed to find in Caroline's alone; and to regain his liberty he would gladly have submitted to any



conditions, even if they had been imposed by a verdict of Doctor's Commons.

Of this chance of freedom from his trammels, however, the unimpeachable rectitude of Mrs. Herbert's conduct left him not the shadow of a hope. He therefore resolved, as he could not altogether escape the wretched bondage, he would render it as little irksome as possible; and for this purpose determined on his wife's passing the ensuing winter in the Forest, whilst he returned to the metropolis, unincumbered by one whom he now regarded as an impertinent spy upon his conduct, and a troublesome restraint on his amusements.

Accordingly at the close of the next summer, which he had passed at different watering-places, whilst the deserted Caroline had given birth to a little girl at the Lodge, Mr. Herbert wrote a laconic letter to her, in which, after stating her preference for *rural* scenes and occupations

over the amusements of London, and slightly mentioning the present delicate state of her health, he proposed her continuing the remainder of the year in the New-Forest.

It was with a confused mixture of inexpressible satisfaction and deep concern, that Mrs. Herbert received this proposal. The country was her delight, and a permanent residence in it most suitable to her habits and inclinations; but when she reflected on the pursuits in which her husband would be engaged, the connections he had formed, and the dangers to which he would be exposed, if freed from all restraint; she could not without the most gloomy apprehensions anticipate the consequences of this extraordinary step. Her accustomed acquiescence in her husband's desires dictated an immediate compliance with his present suggestion; but when in her answer to his letter she thanked him for his kind

consideration, and assured him of her readiness to adopt any plan which he might sanction with his wish, she could not forbear to hint some affectionate warnings with respect to his own conduct. They were conveyed in terms so gentle and yet so solemn, as must have affected a heart less impenetrable than Herbert's; but vanity and vice had steeled it against any other emotions than joy at his emancipation from the domestic restraints of the conjugal tie. From this period he never expressed a wish that Caroline should spend any part of the year in London; he saw her but seldom, and whilst she passed her days in quiet seclusion at the Lodge, he continued year after year to whirl in the fatal vortex of town dissipation.

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## CHAPTER IV.

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**T**HE occupations which engaged Mrs. Herbert. in her retirement, were every way calculated to tranquillize her mind, and heal her wounded spirit. Neglected by the man to whom she was connected by the most solemn tie; separated from him whom her heart had chosen as its dearest friend; deprived of a brother who had rendered every early trial tolerable by his sympathy and participation; and in the bloom of life shut out, by the peculiarity of her circum-

stances, from the general intercourse of social life; she yet found a solace to her sorrows, and a source of soothing comfort, in the conscientious discharge of the several duties which fell within her limited sphere; and whilst pressing her babes to her beating bosom, and shedding over them the tear of maternal tenderness, she experienced those sweet emotions, which can be known only to the mother who devotes herself to the interest and happiness of her children; emotions which filled her heart with so calm, so full, so complete a pleasure, as scarcely left room for the belief that she had any real cause to think herself unfortunate.

With mingled gratitude and delight, she watched the gradual opening of their yet unformed minds, and anticipated the coming period, when

— “ Infant reason grows apace, and calls  
 “ For the kind hand of an assiduous care, .

“ Delightful task ! to rear the tender thought,  
 “ To pour the fresh instruction o’er the mind,  
 “ To teach the young idea how to shoot,  
 “ To breathe the enlivening spirit, and to fix  
 “ The generous purpose in the glowing breast.”

In the exercise of her benevolence, also, she found an inexhaustible fund of satisfaction and employ. Poverty and wretchedness were unknown around her dwelling; every cottage in the neighbourhood bore testimony to her kindness and charity; whilst the blessings of their grateful inhabitants, many of whom from sickness and misery had been by her interference restored to health and comfort, afforded to her pure heart a richer feast than selfishness with all its gaudes and luxuries can ever taste.

In the various plans for the welfare of her poorer neighbours, in which this systematic beneficence engaged her, she was ever assisted by the advice and exertions of Dr. Fairford, to whom the rectory of Rosewood (the parish adjoin-

ing to the Lodge) had been presented some little time before it became the settled residence of Mrs. Herbert. Her pleasure, indeed, on first discovering that this venerable man was amongst the number of her nearest neighbours, had been in some measure checked by the apprehensions that their vicinity to each other might be productive of occasional meetings between herself and one, whom it had been her constant endeavour, as it was her duty, to forget: but her anxiety on this head was speedily relieved by the information that Frederick Fairford had engaged in a mercantile connection in America, as soon as he understood that the future residence of his father was to be in the neighbourhood of that woman whom he felt he must ever fondly love.

For her sake, as well as for the security of his own peace, he condemned himself to this banishment from his native

land; a measure for which Mrs. Herbert's bosom thanked him in a sigh of mingled admiration, pleasure, and regret. She was not entirely ignorant of the motives of his sacrificing his friends and country; and her gratitude for the conduct which those motives produced, could not but partake of a sorrowful recollection that she was the unfortunate, though innocent cause of it. She could not, however, avoid feeling a sincere gratification, that in consequence of this step of Frederick's she was now left at liberty to enjoy the society of his father, and to benefit by his conversation and example, without apprehension or restraint.

Dr. Fairford, when he took possession of the rectory of Rosewood, was fast approaching his grand climacteric, his bodily powers but little impaired, and the faculties of his mind still in their youthful vigour. A life of regularity and teinperance had secured the conti-



nuance of the one, and a temper naturally cheerful, a benevolent heart, and a tranquillity of mind, the certain offspring of genuine and habitual piety, had been the means of preserving him the other. The years of his infancy and early youth were passed amongst his native mountains in the north of England, under the eye and tuition of his exemplary father; where the wild scenes of nature had stored his fancy with images of grandeur, which both created an early taste for the beautiful and sublime, and infused into his character an agreeable tincture of enthusiasm, that gave an additional ardour to his feelings, a peculiar elevation to his sentiments, and threw the most pleasing lustre over his whole character.

With the principles of religion and virtue deeply impressed upon his mind, both by the example and precepts of his venerable parent, he was sent, at the

customary age to college, from whence, after taking his degrees with distinguished credit, he happily returned to the romantic scenes of his childhood with the same simplicity of character and purity of heart as he possessed when he quitted them for the University. In a few years Mr. Fairford married the daughter of a neighbouring clergyman, a young lady every way worthy of her excellent consort; of similar manners, temper, and disposition; but whose society he enjoyed only for a short time, as she died during her first confinement, about ten days after she had presented her husband with that Frederick, whose name is already familiar to the reader. The affliction was a heavy one; but tho' bereft of his dearest earthly friend, Mr. Fairford had consolations, which, if they could not obliterate, at least alleviated the sense of his loss. The bright prospect of a future inseparable union,

afforded him by his religion, and the active performance of those pious and philanthropic duties, which he knew could alone realize those pleasing anticipations, preserved him from despondency, gradually healed his sorrows, and at length tranquillized his bosom. His attention was again completely occupied by the functions of his profession; and in the course of a few years, the education of his son presented a fresh object of interesting employment to his mind.

Having taken his doctor's degree, he confined himself entirely to his living, of which he became the father as well as pastor, and was at once esteemed, beloved, and venerated by all the parishioners. Indeed, the principles of Dr. Fairford were such as ensured him the respect of all those with whom goodness has the least chance of admiration. As a *divine*, holiness, charity, candour, and liberality were the prominent features

of his character; and kindness and philanthropy, which delighted in removing the pressure of misery, and increasing the innocent joys of those around him, stamped him with excellence as a *man*. His religion, free alike from priestly pride or sectarian asperity, taught him humility and forbearance, diffidence in his own speculations, and tenderness for those of others; and whilst it led him to form his conclusions respecting the value of opinions rather from actions than declarations, it induced him also to believe *that* to be the purest system of *faith*, which exemplified itself in a life of piety to God, and of brotherly love towards mankind. He was charitable to every thing but irreligion, and severe to nothing but profligacy; his heart glowed with a sympathetic benevolence for all his fellow-creatures, nor could any thing exclude them from his affection, but an avowed disregard to religion and virtue.

Dr. Fairford indeed realized the description of the poet, and embodied the character that genius had sketched on the canvass of fancy :

“ Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,  
 “ And e’en his failings lean’d to virtue’s side.  
 “ But in his duty prompt at every call,  
 “ He watch’d and wept, he pray’d and felt for all;  
 “ And as a bird each fond endearment tries,  
 “ To tempt its new-fledg’d offspring to the skies,—  
 “ He tried each art, reprov’d each dull delay,  
 “ Allur’d to brighter worlds, and led the way.”

With such an occasional companion to cheer her solitude, whose example would necessarily strengthen and fix every better principle of her heart in the constant practice of philanthropy, the daily exercise of the benevolent affections, and the conscientious discharge of every parental duty, a mind like Mrs. Herbert’s could not fail to experience that tranquil enjoyment, which ambition cannot taste, nor dissipation supply. Like the clear brook which

winds its humble but fertilizing course through the shaded covert, unheeded by the passing traveller, but unruffled also by the storms and tempests which agitate the majestic river and expansive lake, the life of this exemplary character glided on in an uninterrupted stream of usefulness to others and satisfaction to herself.

It was on her return one evening from a round of charitable visits, when having extended her ride some miles beyond its customary limits, and being still in the midst of the New-Forest, at a considerable distance from home, Mrs. Herbert perceived from the gathering clouds, the sullen roar of distant thunder, and the pattering of large drops of rain on the trees, that a furious storm was rapidly approaching.

Turning into a glade that led towards the Lodge, she pressed her horse into a gallop, hoping to escape the worst of the

tempest, but a vivid flash of lightning, succeeded by loud and repeated claps of thunder, determined her to be guided by the advice of the groom who had before proposed that she should take shelter in one of the neighbouring cottages. They quickly approached a clay-built hovel, and a decent looking old woman who stood at the door, immediately requested Mrs. Herbert to alight, and enter her humble dwelling, with such an air of kind hospitality as would not have disgraced a much more splendid habitation. “Lack-a-day, madam,” says she, while drawing a chair for her guest, “I wish I had a better place to ask you into; but mean as it is, ’twill shelter you from the storm, and you be truly welcome to stay till it is clear gone.” Mrs. Herbert readily seated herself on a wooden bottomed chair, and being left alone in the homely apartment, while the old woman went to

point out a place of shelter for the servant and horses, she had sufficient leisure to examine its furniture; a glance, indeed, completed the survey; and while the absence of common necessities betrayed the extreme of indigence, the cleanliness and neat appearance of every thing she saw, proved a decency of mind, that very much prepossessed Mrs. Herbert in favour of the owner.

A comparison, hastily sketched, between the poverty of her present hospitable hostess, and the affluence of her own circumstances, drew from the bosom of this amiable woman a sigh, in which gratitude and piety had an equal share. A spontaneous wish to add another act of benevolence to those in which she was daily occupied, arose in her mind; and she was already busied in plans for the accomplishment of her charitable purpose, when the cry of a child interrupted her meditations, and awakened



a new train of ideas. The sound proceeded from an inner room, the door of which stood half open.

Mrs. Herbert, with all a mother's tender sensibility, sprang to the apartment, where she discovered two beds of straw on the floor, covered with linen, white as the blossom of the hawthorn; on one of these lay a lovely child, who already awakened by the rolling of the thunder, screamed aloud at the sight of a stranger, and throwing its arms about the neck of a pretty little girl, who hung in fond solicitude over the bed, hid its face in her bosom.

At this moment the old woman returned, and apologising for such a disturbance, took the child from its young nurse, and having hushed its fears, and told the girl to follow them into the outer room, she entreated that her guest would be pleased to resume her seat. "Alack, poor Mary," she cried, while wiping

away the tears, which now silently coursed each other down her rosy cheeks, “thee’st little think how many worse storms than this, thou’lt meet with in life. Is it not a sweet infant, madam?” “One of the most lovely, I ever beheld,” returned Mrs. Herbert. “Is she related to you?” “Alack-a-day, madam, no; she is no relation of ours,” replied the poor woman. “If the truth were known indeed I fancy she’s a chance-child; but it was a sorry chance for her, poor girl, when she lit on such poor folks as we be: not that I grudge her any thing I can g’e her, but for her own sake, I am sorry she is not likely to be better off; for I am now old, and Jenny there, whenever it shall please God to take me, will be almost as good as friendless. What then will become of poor Mary, I know not.” Mrs. Herbert’s eyes during this speech had been fixed on the child, who, now perfectly awake and recovered

from her late alarm, smiled in her face, while she pressed its dimpled hand within her own, and in that smile discovered a resemblance, which, however accidental and transient, awakened in her bosom ideas and remembrances, that instantly secured there the most partial interest in favour of the orphan. “ My good woman,” said she, “ after a moment’s pause, you have greatly raised my curiosity; you appear to be now in a station that you have not always been accustomed to; if it be no secret, tell me your story, and inform me how this pretty creature came under your protection? I do not ask from an idle curiosity, but with a wish to relieve your necessities.”

‘ Heaven bless you, my good lady,’ replied the old woman, ‘ you are very kind to trouble yourself about such poor folk as we; poor enough we be in all conscience, but, thank God, we be honest; and a good name, you know, madam,

as I often tell my Jenny, the wise man says, "is better than great riches." "Right," interrupted Mrs. Herbert, "and I heartily wish that a greater number of every class of people thought with Solomon in that respect; but I am most impatient for your story."

'Lack-a-day, madam,' she answered, 'my story may be told in a very few words; there is little in it to entertain ye, I fear. I was born of creditable parents, who were very well to do in the world, and who might ha' gid me a few hundred pounds; but I married early in life against their consent, thinking I knew better than they what was best for me, and I ha' often thought the misfortunes that followed were a kind of judgment for my undutifulness; they never forgave me, and died without g'eing me their blessing, or leaving any provision for me or my children. John Wheatley, (for that was the name of my

husband) was to be sure only a labouring man in the gardens or grounds, wherever he could get employed. But a' was sober, honest, and industrious, and though a' had been wild in his youth, which was the reason, I suppose, of my friends' objection, a' turned very steady after he married, and behaved kindly and tenderly to me. Whilst *he* worked out of doors, *I* took in sewing, and by good management we always contrived to have a little laid up against a rainy day, as the saying is: well, in a few years we were able to keep a cow, a pig, and a few poultry, which helped greatly. It pleased God that we had only two children, a son and a daughter; whom, to the best of our knowledge, we endeavoured to bring up in the fear of the LORD, and duty to their neighbours. For several years we were as happy as the day was long. Oh, madam, it is but very lately that I have been able to

look back upon that time without crying bitterly, but I a' no tears left now, I believe:—Well, no matter; but as I was saying, all went smoothly on till my daughter was about eighteen years of age. At that time, a great squire in our neighbourhood set about building a fine house. It was to be so grand, that the country workmen were not good enough to be employed; so a' sent for a great many topping hands from London. Amongst the carpenters came a young man, who said a' was well known to an old friend of my husband's, and indeed he brought a letter of recommendation to 'en from Mr. Jenkinson, and for his sake at first we received him kindly, but afterwards, when we saw more of 'en, we liked 'en for his own. He used to spend all his evenings at our house, go to church wi' us constantly every Sunday, and seemed so sober, and was withal so cheerful and pleasant, that in a little

time we loved 'en as if a' had been one of the family. Many a time have my poor husband and I said, happy would be the woman that Jacob should fix on for a wife; and to be sure I can't say how happy we were, when we found, of all the village girls, our own Betty was his favourite. Well did she deserve his love, indeed, for never was there a better or more dutiful child. To cut short my story, however, a' soon won her heart, and her father gi'd his consent to the match. About a week before the wedding day, the squire's house being finished, Jacob took leave of us for a few days, to go to Lunnon, as a' said, on business. We were all very sorry to part wi' him; but Betty, methought, seemed more afflicted than was reasonable, considering how very soon they were to meet again: Poor thing! her sorrow was a warning of what was to follow." The old woman here paused, and observing Jenny's tears

flowed fast, she bade her go and put the child to bed again ; an errand the weeping girl gladly availed herself of, and Dame Wheatley then renewed her narrative. “ Betty received one letter from him a few days after a’ left the country, but though we expected ’en every day, yet several weeks passed on without his appearance, or so much as a second letter to Betty. My husband and I now began to be very much frightened ; John our son said, for sartain Jacob was dead ; nothing else could occasion this silence. Poor Betty said nothing ; but she looked as if her heart would burst, and moped about, the very picture of despair, when she thought we did not see her ; yet when wi’ us, she always forced a smile ; it was however a melancholy one, and only served to shew us plainer how much she suffered. At last, her father, quite tired of waiting, without saying any thing to our poor child, wrote to the



person who had recommended Jacob to us, desiring to know what had become of him : as bad luck would ha' it, the answer came when we were all sitting together, my husband broke the seal, and when he had read the letter, ' I feared as much ! ' he cried ; ' Oh, that bad man, Jacob ! But don't grieve for him, my dear love, he does not deserve it ; base fellow ! he is married to another woman.' " Then, indeed, I am undone ! " cried the poor girl, as she fell without life on the floor. Oh, good madam ! how shall I tell you what her poor father and myself felt at this speech. But why," continued she, observing Mrs. Herbert deeply affected, " why should I pain your heart, by relating all the particulars of our affliction ? From this moment, the poor soul never held up her head, and lived no longer than till she brought into the world Jenny, the girl that is just gone.

in t'other room. Poor child! she is tender-hearted, and always cries when she hears her mother's sad story, but it is a lesson that I hope she will be the better for. Once her mother was as innocent as herself. Well, madam, the death of my poor dear Betty was a heavy stroke to us all: my dear husband never recovered it, and after some months' hard struggle between grief and sickness, he too was taken from me.

“ John, my son, had been some time married to a very good young woman, and rented a pretty little farm at the edge of the Forest. On his father's death, he proposed to take me into partnership; and as it was lonely for me and little Jenny to live by ourselves, he took us home to his own house, where he and his wife did every thing to make us comfortable. For a little while we went on very well; till a wicked neighbour, to save himself from punishment, accused

my son of stealing the King's deer. That they every year had done 'en a terrible deal of mischief, was very well known, and a deer was one night found dead in an outhouse of his; but God knows, John was innocent. All he could say, however, went for nothing; the justice who examined 'en, was a hard man, and besides, might be a little overtaken with ~~win~~ at the time, for he often did business after dinner; and in spite of all that could be said in John's favour, he sent 'en to prison. To Winchester the poor fellow went, with a heart almost broke; leaving his family, as you may be sure, madam, as much afflicted as himself. I had been poorly in health, indeed, a good while, and this disgrace and distress of my son made me so much worse, that I was unable to assist my daughter in the management of the farm during the many months that passed between John's commitment and

the 'size-time. By degrees every thing went to rack and ruin, and we were obliged to sell some part of our little stock to pay our rent, the expences of my illness, and to support John in jail. Two or three weeks however before the assizes, the wicked fellow who had actually committed the offence for which John had been imprisoned, being discovered in deer-stealing, was sent to Winchester, when a' confessed that he had killed the buck which was found in my son's outhouse. John was of course acquitted on the charge, but he returned home only to follow to the grave his dear wife Sally, whose heart was broke by her husband's going to jail, and his goods being seized by his landlord under a warrant of distress for rent. Poor lad! how much did he take on. I verily thought he too would ha' died for grief; but it pleased God to strengthen him to support his trial, and to be a comfort to

his mother. Indeed, he never forgot me in his affliction, but declared I should share every penny he earned ; and with his own hand built me the cottage in which I now live. Having no children, however, he thought it would be better for 'en to go into service, and a' was lucky enough at once to get into constant work at the Lodge, (Squire Herbert's.)" Perceiving her auditor change colour, the old woman hesitated.

"Sure, madam," said she, "I tire you with my long story." "Not at all, not at all," replied Mrs. Herbert; "pray go on, tell me how you live now, and how you came by the interesting child, which I have just seen." "As for the matter of living, madam," continued the old woman, "what wi' knitting and spinning, we do pretty well. Then we keep a little school at day-time; for Jenny can read, write, and sew, very tolerably, though she is only eight years old, and

never had any other larning than what I could gi' her: so she teaches the letters and needle-work, while I, because my eyes be now too bad for any thing else, shew the children how to knit and spin; and concerning that sweet baby, it is, I believe, about two years, come Candle-mas, since Jenny and I coming home late one night from the next market-town, saw a man just before us, who was walking very slowly, talking very much to himself. There was something so particular about 'en, that, being a little frightened, I thought I'd watch to see which road he went, and get out of his way; for I could not help thinking he was beside himself. Sometimes he stopped, and fell down on his knees; then he got up again, and took something out of a basket he carried; then he laid it down in the road, went away a few steps, and walked slowly back again; at last, a' took it up, and said with a

shocking oath, “ I *cannot* do it; if I am *murdered* myself, I *cannot* do it.” The word *murder* sadly frightened me; however I said nothing to Jenny, but pretending to be tired, sat down, till I thought he had got a good way down the road, and then hurrying the child along, I took the first path that I knew led to our cottage. But, lack-a-day ! madam, we had not gone a hundred yards, when what should I see but the very same man sitting on the stump of a tree almost close to us; he looked at me, and getting up very quickly, and placing his basket just in the path before us, “ For God’s sake, good woman,” said he, “ have compassion on a poor innocent baby ; I have too many crimes to answer for already.” So saying, a’ ran forward and was out of sight before I had time to make any answer : so much indeed was I frightened, that I hardly knew whether I was awake or in a dream, espe-

cially as there was something in his voice that made me think I had heard it before. Before I had recovered myself, Jenny opened the basket, and screamed out, 'Oh, granny! here is a little baby, but I believe it is dead.' God forbid, my child, says I, as I looked into the basket, where indeed I saw an infant seemingly about a month old, not dead however, as Jenny supposed, but in a sound sleep. 'Oh, granny! let us take the little thing home,' said she, 'I will nurse and play with it; you will not leave it here, granny?' I was so surprised, madam, that I could not answer the child immediately. However, I had no doubts, as she feared, about taking care of the poor babe. So wrapping it in my cloak, I gi'd Jenny the basket to carry, and after waiting a little while to see if the man would return, hurried to our cottage as fast as I could. Of the man we saw no more,



but the story soon spread, and numbers of people came out of curiosity to see the little child that had been found in the Forest; but no one wished to have any hands in taking care of it. Some advised me at once to carry it to the workhouse: others said, the child had most likely been stolen, and they should be afraid of coming to trouble about it: but one, wiser than the rest, persuaded me to advertise it: this I listened to, not because I wanted to get quit of the poor thing, but because I thought I might, by so doing, find out its parents, who perhaps were then grieving for their loss; but the advertisement was never answered, nor from that day to this, have I been able to guess who it could belong to. The parish-officers were indeed very good, and offered to ha' the child taken care of, knowing, as they said, my poverty; but they insisted on taking it into the house, and indeed,

madam, I could not bring myself to part with it, for it seemed to me that Heaven had thrown it in my way for some end which I could not then foresee, and I believed it my duty to take all the care I could of it. I knew that for some years it could take but little from our means, and I thought to myself, it was but working a little harder when it wanted more, and that in time it might be able to maintain itself: so, madam, I got a poor neighbour, who luckily then had been just brought to bed, to nurse it for a few weeks; when it was strong enough to be weaned, I then, with Jenny's help, took charge of it, and it throve and grew apace, and never was there a lovelier babe, as you might have seen; for our parts, we love it as well as if it was ever so nearly related to us."

Mrs. Herbert, whose heart was "open as day to melting charity," had been extremely affected by the whole of this

simple unadorned narrative of facts; but for the little foundling she felt an unusual degree of interest; and after a few moments' consideration, proposed to the old woman to take the entire charge of it upon herself. Dame Wheatley's looks expressed a mixture of surprize and doubt; which Mrs. Herbert perceiving, immediately informed her of her name and residence. The old woman no longer felt any degree of repugnance to resign the little girl to a lady, whose character for beneficence and goodness she had frequently heard celebrated by her son in language of the warmest praise and admiration. With many blessings therefore on her humanity, she immediately acceded to Mrs. Herbert's proposal; but the evening was now far advanced, the storm dispersed, and the horses at the door; there was not, consequently, at present, time for farther arrangements, and Mrs. Herbert, bidding

her hostess adieu with much kindness, promised to see her again very speedily, when slipping a crown into the hand of Jenny as she again kissed the sleeping babe, she mounted her horse, and pursued her way home.

The sky was now clear; the moon had risen in full splendour, and with her silver ray tipped the dark woods which fringed the horizon on all sides, while the soft light was reflected from the spreading foliage of the majestic oak on which the drops of rain still trembled. The yellow blossom of the lowly furze, and yet more humble purple flower of the heath, blending their sweets with the fragrance of a thousand other aromatic plants and herbs, sown by the liberal hand of nature, poured upon the surrounding air a cloud of rich perfume. The feathered tribes had already chaunted their evening song, and were now still in their sheltered nests; all but the

nightingale, whose thrilling notes swelled on the breeze with sweet and soothing melody. Again the timid tenants of the forest, the graceful deer, so lately driven by the tempest to their secret recesses, ventured forth, and with frequent starts, fearfully glancing round, as if to assure themselves of safety from the murderous intruder, man, frisked in playful gambols on the velvet turf, or bounded lightly through the glade to commit their nightly depredations on the ripening harvest of the neighbouring farm. Then is the time,

“ For those whom wisdom and whom nature charm,  
 “ To steal themselves from the degenerate world,  
 “ And soar above the little scene of things,  
 “ To soothe the throbbing passions into peace,  
 “ And woo lone quiet in her silent walks.”

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## CHAPTER V

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MRS. Herbert, to whom the charms of nature afforded a source of never-failing delight, rode home in silent rapture, meditating on the adventures of the evening, and forming schemes for the future welfare of the little orphan, and the more comfortable accommodation of its indigent protectress. Her husband's absence from the Lodge prevented her from consulting him on the subject; nor did she perceive any reasonable ground of apprehension that he could object to them.

The allowance made by her marriage settlement had been ample ; and a rational œconomy, which no superfluous expences ever broke in upon, enabled her to indulge every benevolent purpose, without appropriating in that manner any part of the sum annually allotted by Mr. Herbert for the establishment at the Lodge.

The opportunity which now presented itself of protecting helpless infancy, and relieving the indigence of advanced life, was to Mrs. Herbert irresistible ; and having communicated the particulars of her visit to Dame Wheatley's cottage to Dr. Fairford, and received his sanction on her plan, on the following morning she sent for the little girl. As soon as a more comfortable dwelling could be prepared for her reception, the old woman was removed from the hovel she had so long inhabited, and established as superintendant of the Dairy ; whilst,

as a reward for his dutiful conduct to his mother, and some compensation for his early misfortune, Mrs. Herbert raised her son John from a day-labourer in the field to the place of game-keeper, which happened to be at that time vacant. She wished also to have taken little Jenny into her own family, but the old woman acknowledged she should feel quite desolate if deprived of both the children at once. Jenny, therefore, was permitted to remain with her grand-mother, except at those hours when she attended a school, established by the Doctor, and patronised by Mrs. Herbert, where the children of the neighbouring poor made daily progress in the knowledge of their moral and religious duties, at the same time that they were instructed in the means of getting their bread.

The benevolence which had prompted Mrs. Herbert's conduct in this affair, soon found a sweet and gratifying reward



in the uncommonly amiable qualities of the orphan, and the grateful attachment of its former humble protectors. In a short time, indeed, little Mary became a general favourite in the family. Edmund and Matilda were delighted with the acquisition of a new play-fellow, an affection which their mother encouraged with alacrity, as she perceived that it was returned by the warm heart of the little interesting stranger with a proportionate ardour. Edmund especially became every day more assiduous in promoting the pleasure of his adopted sister. For her sake, the young hero, like the knights of old, would brave the most formidable dangers. For her he would climb the forest oak, to despoil it of its acorns, or the mountain ash of its beautiful berries. He would now tempt the deceitful marsh to gather the penciled Iris; and now with numbed fingers pluck the long transparent icicle

that hung glittering from the low straw-thatched cottage. Matilda also was never unwilling to share with her friend any of the little treasures she possessed from the liberal, but well-regulated indulgence of her excellent mother; who, on her part, found her own satisfaction increase, as she observed in her daughter the germ of those excellent qualities of the mind and heart, which it was the chief and sweetest employment of life to nourish, expand, and perfect.

Thus year after year glided on with little variation in the habits of Mrs. Herbert's family, until Mary attained, as nearly as Dame Wheatley could ascertain, her sixth year, when its tranquillity was suddenly interrupted by an unexpected visit from Mr. Herbert, accompanied by Sir Charles Fitzmordaunt and his wife, a handsome but highly fashionable French-woman.

When introduced to Mrs. Herbert by her husband as Lady Antoinette Fitzmordaunt, the blooming bride, with affected rapture, flew forwards to embrace her sister-in-law, and in imperfect English expressed the extreme happiness she experienced at an interview for which she had languished with unspeakable impatience. “ Ah, ma chere sœur,” cried she, “ what joy shall I find in your charming society! How gladly shall I receive you for my instructress in the fashions and pleasures of your enchanting country! Oh, what an air, what loveliness! Teach me those winning graces, those bewitching manners!”—

‘ Your *own* manners, my dear Lady Antoinette, are already so fascinating,’ interrupted Mr. Herbert, ‘ and the fashions you have imported so becoming, that it is impossible either should be improved by such a *rustic* as Caroline.’

“ Ah! que vous etes un flatteur,” replied

the lady, surveying herself with an air of increased complacency in a large pier-glass, and adjusting at the same time some of the gaudy ornaments with which she was decorated.

Mrs. Herbert, though disgusted with the levity and conceit of her sister, made a polite return to her compliments, and assured her, she felt herself much honoured by her expressions of regard. At this moment Sir Charles entered the room, and his sister, glad of an opportunity of breaking from Lady Antoinette, immediately stepped forward to welcome him to the Lodge. But the words she would have pronounced hung upon her faltering tongue, as she involuntarily started back at the deepened gloom which she observed to be settled on his features. His brow contracted itself as if with anxious thought. His countenance was wan, and his eye hollow,

with an expression at once melancholy and fierce.

A few seconds elapsed before she could sufficiently recover from her disorder to congratulate him on his marriage; and to chide him pleasantly for having so long delayed to inform her of it. He advanced, and offered her his hand, endeavouring to force his features into a smile; but it was evidently doing violence to them, and his confused answer to what his sister had said, proved clearly that his countenance was too true an index to the gloom and agitation of his bosom.

Mrs. Herbert was affected by his appearance, and strove, by leading the conversation to general subjects, to divert his thoughts from that secret melancholy which seemed so much to depress them. His manner, however, was embarrassed and absent; and his attention seemed to be directed to any

thing rather than to what was said by his sister. The entrance of the children at length proved a relief to Mrs. Herbert, at whose desire Edmund and Matilda ran to their father, and threw their arms around his neck with an apparent warmth of affection that for a moment awakened the parent in his bosom. Mary, in the mean time, walked silently to Mrs. Herbert's chair, where she stood a few moments unnoticed, whilst her companions were introduced to their uncle and aunt. The appearance of the children seemed to add to the agitation of Sir Charles, and when he spoke to Edmund his emotion would hardly allow him to articulate; at length turning suddenly round towards Mary, "and to whom does that little girl belong?" said he, "you have but *two* children, I think, Caroline?"

'This is a little orphan,' replied Mrs. Herbert, 'a child which I found in

a friendless state, and which Mr. Herbert kindly allows me to take under my protection.' "An orphan!" said Sir Charles, hastily raising the auburn ringlets that overshadowed her forehead, and gazing earnestly on her face; "an orphan! Do you not know her parents?" Mary coloured and shrunk back; but Sir Charles, grasping her hand, reiterated his question, whilst the frightened child clung closer to her protectress.

By this time the vehemence of the baronet had excited the attention of all the party, and Lady Antoinette enquired, "what was the matter?"

"Did *you* observe it?" cried he impetuously. 'Observe what?' returned her ladyship. "An *orphan*, did you say?" repeated he with the most violent emotion, not at all attending to his lady's question. But before Mrs. Herbert could make any reply, her husband, bursting

into a loud laugh, exclaimed, ‘ ’Pon my honour, Fitzmordaunt, I believe you mean to claim Mary for your own property. Well, you have my most decided consent; and I should think Caroline also would by this time have no objection to be rid of the burthen. You, Lady Antoinette, will certainly not refuse to receive a protégée of your husband’s.’

This speech excited much merriment between Mr. Herbert and the lady to whom the latter part of it was addressed; which gave Sir Charles an opportunity of recovering from the disorder into which he had been surprized, and of learning from Mrs. Herbert an outline of Mary’s story. “And pray, Caroline,” said he with assumed composure, “what do you mean to do with this adopted child?” ‘I mean,’ she replied, ‘to educate her in a manner that may enable her to become a virtuous and useful member of society; for indeed her



amiable disposition has so far won upon my heart, that I love her almost with a mother's fondness.' "And I too," cried Edmund, running up to Mary, and kissing her cheek, "love her dearly." Sir Charles bit his lip in silence, and Mrs. Herbert seeing that the child still continued to be alarmed by the violence and peculiarity of his manner, kindly bade her retire with her companions to resume their play.

Lady Antoinette, elevating her shoulders with a shrug, to which no precise meaning was annexed, and smiling for the sole purpose of displaying her ivory teeth, observed it was une aventure bien drole; and continued her conversation with Mr. Herbert on the same trifling topics which had before engaged her attention.

Not so Mrs. Herbert. She had been somewhat alarmed, as well as exceedingly surprized, at the violent confusion which

Sir Charles had manifested on seeing Mary. She was clear this effect could not be accidental; and her imagination immediately suggested, that there might be some connection (though of what nature she could not conceive) between the little girl and the melancholy which seemed to shade her brother's mind. Her speculations, however, were only momentary; for Sir Charles, after a short silence, began, with some degree of anxiety in his manner, to reprove her for thus receiving into her family a child of whom nobody could give any account, which might be a beggar's brat, or the illegitimate offspring of the lowest peasant. "Besides," continued he, "do you not foresee the anxiety which you are laying up for yourself hereafter, in indulging this romantic whim? Do you not perceive that the little urchin will be a source of unhappiness to the family? Edmund is already doatingly fond of the

child; and depend upon it, his affection will not be lessened by the constant familiar intercourse that must subsist between them, if you continue her under your protection. Conceive the disgrace that would attach to the whole family, if *my nephew* should hereafter think seriously of a base-born foundling."

'I have always been of opinion,' replied Mrs. Herbert, 'that no opportunity of promoting *certain good* should be neglected, from the indistinct apprehension of incurring *future evil*. On this principle I have taken charge of Mary. With my husband's approbation, I rescued the dear child from poverty, possibly from guilt and wretchedness. The good old woman who was the humble instrument of heaven to save her, perhaps from the knife of the murderer, was my example. She did all in her power; but sorely oppressed with want and affliction herself, she could only

have transmitted to Mary the inheritance of her own misery. Could I then have acted otherwise than I have? Surely, brother, had you been thus circumstanced, you would not, you *could* not, have avoided doing as I have done."

Sir Charles, colouring deeply, rose from his chair, and having measured the room with hasty strides, again sat down; whilst Mrs. Herbert continued: "For the rest, it shall be my earnest endeavour to give Mary just notions of the various duties she has to perform, as a religious, a rational, and a social being. If she answer the expectations which I confess I am sanguine enough already to have formed, I shall have no reason to regret the pains I may take on her account. If not, the consequences must rest with *herself*; whilst my disappointment will be lightened by the consciousness of having discharged my duty."

‘ But,’ resumed Sir Charles hastily, ‘ do you really wish me to understand that you are *indifferent* as to the probable effects which the constant intercourse between Edmund and Mary may produce? Are you careless about the fondness which he already discovers for her? And would you consent to so preposterous a thing as an union between them, supposing he were to grow up with the same sentiments of preference which the boy at present entertains for this adopted orphan ?’

“ I candidly acknowledge,” returned Mrs. Herbert with a smile, “ the formidable danger you mention never till this moment presented itself to my imagination ; nor does it even now appear to be of sufficient magnitude to excite just cause of uneasiness. At any rate, several years must elapse before what you dread could possibly take place ; and in the mean time I promise you my

utmost care will be exerted to prevent any thing that might reflect *disgrace* upon our family. I shall endeavour to implant in the minds of all my dear children a proper *self-esteem*, a just sense of honour and integrity, and that rational and ingenuous pride, which will make them despise all that is vicious and base ; and with principles like these in their minds, we shall, I hope, have little reason to apprehend that they will *disgrace* either their families or themselves."

Though this speech was not entirely suited to the taste of the baronet, yet as it would bear an interpretation which met in some degree the sentiments he had expressed, he did not feel altogether dissatisfied with it ; taking therefore Mrs. Herbert's hand, he begged, in a more gentle tone, that she would pardon " the warmth with which he had expressed the interest he must ever feel in what related to herself and her children ;

assured her he thought her little protégée promised fair to reward her kindness; but at the same time begged she would be prepared for a disappointment, as he was forced to acknowledge that ingratitude in similar instances was by no means uncommon."

Here terminated a conversation which was never again resumed. Sir Charles affected indeed to treat Mary with some little degree of kindness, but Mrs. Herbert easily detected the coldness of dislike under this forced behaviour; and the child, who had not forgotten the surprize and terror excited by his first salutation, received with shyness and reserve all his marks of attention. No consideration could induce her to counterfeit a regard which she did not feel; and as her example already influenced the conduct of Edmund, who adopted both her attachments and dislikes; Matilda appeared to be the only one of the little

group on whom Sir Charles's faint caresses were not entirely thrown away.

As a more intimate acquaintance further developed the character of Lady Antoinette to Mrs. Herbert, no favourable trait appeared, which in any degree lessened the disagreeable impression made by her first introduction. She discovered her new sister to be vain and artificial; bold in her behaviour, and free in her opinions; the symmetry of her form spoiled by the constant distortions of affectation, and the delicacy of her complexion concealed rather than heightened by a mask of paint. Her studied graces destroyed the natural expression of her beautiful features, whilst her confident air of tonish superiority entirely obliterated every engaging female charm. Her mind, in the mean time, was wholly uncultivated; her conversation frivolous, and her sentiments mean; yet a fashionable educa-



tion had given her many artificial acquirements; and as she had an easy address, talked with volubility on all subjects, whether she understood them or not; danced well, sang in a superior stile, and swept the strings of the harp with grace and execution: Lady Antoinette passed in society for an enchanting woman. She possessed also a certain playfulness of manner, which won attention from the other sex, and often excited the angry jealousy of her own. In Mrs. Herbert's eye, however, it wore the appearance of disgusting levity, tho' she endeavoured to persuade herself that it might result from national habits, rather than from want of principle or depravity of heart.

From Sir Charles's conduct it was evident that whatever might have been his attachment to his wife originally, it had now faded away into indifference if not dislike. The striking contrast in

their dispositions, indeed, led Mrs. Herbert to suspect, that genuine affection had not formed the basis of their union; and when she discovered that Lady Antoinette was the only child of a French noble of some wealth, and greater expectations, she was convinced, that her brother had been actuated by mercenary motives rather than by the dictates of his heart. But she had no means of obtaining information on this head. Sir Charles studiously avoided every chance of being alone with his sister. A settled gloom appeared to have taken possession of his mind; a mysterious subject of sorrow seemed to absorb all his thoughts. Nor was her curiosity excited on the subject of his marriage alone; she anxiously wished for an opportunity of gaining from him some intelligence respecting the absent Henry, but felt herself unequal to particular enquiries by the abruptness of his an-

swers to any leading questions, and the solicitude with which he immediately changed the topic of conversation, whenever the name of Henry escaped her lips.

One morning, however, finding herself accidentally alone with Sir Charles, Mrs. Herbert determined to wave her fears, and asked him, whilst the tear started in her eye, whether he had “any knowledge of the situation or fate of their brother?” Fitzmordaunt’s features instantly betrayed the most evident marks of agitation, and casting a fierce and penetrating look at his sister, that for a moment quite embarrassed her, ‘What,’ cried he, ‘is the meaning of this persecution?’ “Excuse me,” said she, “I ought not to have introduced so painful a subject, but my heart was full of it. Oh! he was so kind, so affectionate a brother to me! No length of absence can destroy the recollection

of his goodness, or obliterate impressions which early attachment engraved so deeply on my mind. Besides, the uncertainty of his present situation; the *mystery* that seems to hang about his fate."

' *Mystery!*' repeated Sir Charles, with quivering lip and face of deadly paleness. Alarmed at his emotion, Mrs. Herbert exclaimed, "wherefore these marks of agitation, Sir Charles? Is Henry indeed lost to us? Are you acquainted with his melancholy fate? Reveal it to me, I conjure you! I am now prepared for the *worst* tidings!" 'Of what do you *suspect* me?' returned the baronet, in a voice scarcely articulate. "*Suspect* you!" returned Mrs. Herbert in a tone of astonishment; but pausing for a moment, she proceeded—"of *nothing*—but the wish to spare me pain, by concealing from my knowledge some dreadful truth."

This declaration seemed to lessen his perturbation; a moment's recollection restored his composure, and advancing towards his sister, Sir Charles taking her hand, entreated she would spare him on a subject most distressing to his feelings. 'Your *worst* fears, however, my dear Caroline, are but too well founded. Henry!'—"Is our dear brother then really *dead*?" interrupted Mrs. Herbert. Averting his face from her eagerly enquiring eye, Sir Charles in a solemn tone replied, 'Henry is indeed *lost* to us for ever.'

Mrs. Herbert breathing with difficulty, sank back in her chair. 'Henry is lost to us for ever,' was the only sound that vibrated on her ear, it was the only idea that filled her mind, and rendered her unconscious of Sir Charles having abruptly quitted the room when he had pronounced the awful sentence.

When the first overflowings of affliction were in some measure assuaged, recollection naturally presented to Mrs. Herbert's mind the *manner* of Sir Charles during their conversation. The changes of his countenance, the incoherence of his expressions, his wild look and tremulous voice, were all unintelligible; and only convinced her that something inexplicable veiled the fate of her favourite brother, to which Sir Charles was privy, but did not wish her to enquire about or penetrate. She concluded indeed that the recollection of his own coldness and unkind behaviour to a brother who had merited only affection and esteem, might be one source of the distress which he had just manifested, and account in a great measure for the secret gloom which marked the general habit of his mind, and which from the time of this conversation seemed to be increased. Sir Charles was now constantly reserved

and silent; he joined the circle in the drawing-room as rarely as was consistent with politeness; and anxiously avoided a second *tete-a-tete* with his sister.

Lady Antoinette, on the contrary, was the admiration of every visiter, and the life of every party. Her object was to attract attention, and she generally succeeded in it. Herbert was her shadow, and submitted to her whims and caprices with the most ready compliance. If she sang, he listened in silent rapture. Did she play, his flute accompanied her harp. In her walks he was her constant attendant; and when she mounted her horse, he was ever at her side. The lovely Antoinette seemed to engross all his thoughts; and his neglect of Mrs. Herbert and her children increased with his attention to this fascinating Frenchwoman.

At length Sir Charles announced to the party his determination to quit the

Lodge, in consequence of letters that rendered his immediate presence in London necessary; an intelligence which Lady Antoinette received with undisguised pleasure, as she was now perfectly disgusted with the insipid sameness of country society, and the dull routine of rural engagements. Nor was Mrs. Herbert less gratified by the information, as it afforded her a prospect of being freed from visitors whose habits and sentiments were so little congenial with her own. Her gratification, however, received a severe check, by Mr. Herbert informing her that Edmund and Matilda should with himself accompany their uncle and aunt to town, where he said it was his intention to place them both at public seminaries for education.

This information was received by Mrs. Herbert as the death-warrant of all her fondest hopes. The principles of piety and virtue which she had imbibed from



her mother, happily preserved her own mind from contamination in the pernicious atmosphere of a great school; but she recollected with horror the sad effects she had observed in the minds of others, from their promiscuous intercourse with children of different tempers and opposite dispositions, all necessarily following the same round of formal tuition, and all equally unattended to, as far as regarded the cultivation of the *moral feelings*, and the regulation of the *heart*.

From the birth of her own children, she had determined to educate them under her immediate observation. She had thought much on the important subject, and aided her reflections by studying every popular writer on education; and thus digested a plan, which she flattered herself would fully answer the great end she had in view, that of giving Edmund and Matilda every necessary accomplishment, and at the same time

fixing in their young and ductile minds those *moral* and *religious habits*, without which, she justly conceived, the education of a rational and responsible creature could not be complete. Dr. Fairford had promised to undertake the entire superintendence of her son's classical studies, as well as to assist her in any other point on which she might be doubtful of her own abilities; and the extreme indifference of Mr. Herbert, who had ever paid less attention, if possible, to her children than herself, left her no reason to apprehend from him any interruption to a plan from which every other difficulty seemed to be removed.

Her astonishment therefore was equal to her distress, when Herbert communicated to her his resolution. But he had adopted it less upon his own deliberations than the suggestions of Lady Antoinette, who had repeatedly declared, that the

*beauty* and *spirit* of Matilda (between whom and himself she protested there was the most *striking likeness*) would be entirely ruined in the stupid repose of her present situation, for want of that enlivening polish which a more fashionably-regulated education only could bestow. With respect to Edmund too, she had frequently observed, that if his father wished him to become a pedant or a clown, he could not decide better than to let him remain under the care of his mother, and the tuition of a country parson; but if on the contrary he really wished to see his son as elegant as *himself*, he would immediately remove him from a situation where he would be effectually excluded from every advantage that could polish and refine him.

It was this artful flattery of Lady Antoinette, that led Mr. Herbert to think on a subject, which had never before occupied a moment's consideration with

him ; and having once decided according to her advice, he became positive in carrying his plan into immediate execution.

In vain did his wife urge every argument in favour of her own system ; in vain did she represent those objections which had occurred to her own observation and reflection against the popular schools he had mentioned. Herbert was deaf to argument, and impenetrable by entreaty. “ He had resolved,” he said, “ that the spirit of his children should not be damped, their minds contracted, and their prejudices fixed, by the confined notions of such preceptors as they would find in the Forest. He meant his boy for action, and his girl for conquest, and would not therefore suffer them to be stupified by the dull rules of domestic tuition. They were not *plebeians*, nor intended for the drowsy scenes of retired life ; but born

to fill a certain rank in society, and he was resolved they should have *that* sort of education which might qualify them for conducting themselves with proper *eclat* in the sphere they were destined for. “ This is only to be acquired,” added he, “ at those public seminaries, where they will gain more knowledge of the world in six months, than *your* system, Caroline, would furnish them with in half a century.”

‘ Heaven forbid,’ replied Mrs. Herbert, ‘ that the yet unformed minds of my children should be entrusted to the care of those instructors, who make ‘ a *knowledge* of the *world* a necessary branch, or the glitter of superficial accomplishment the principal object, of education ; whilst every valuable quality is either wholly neglected, or considered only of secondary moment. My favourite writer’s description of modern education and its effects has always

appeared to me to be a masterly sketch, in which the strokes of the pencil of truth were full as evident as the tints of poetry :

“ Accomplishments have taken virtue’s place,  
 “ And wisdom falls before exterior grace ;  
 “ We slight the precious kernel of the stone,  
 “ And toil to polish its rough coat alone.  
 “ A just deportment, manners grac’d with ease ;  
 “ Elegant phrase, and figure form’d to please ;  
 “ Are qualities that seem to comprehend  
 “ Whatever parents, guardians, schools intend ;  
 “ Hence an unfurnished and a listless mind,  
 “ Though busy, trifling ; empty, tho’ refin’d.  
 “ Hence, all that interferes, and dares to clash  
 “ With indolence and luxury, is *trash*.”

As reasonable and accountable beings, it appears to me, that the *moral* and *religious* principles of children should be the points chiefly attended to in their tuition ; and in my humble opinion, badly do those persons fulfil this important task, who fail to make the solid improvement of the *mind* the grand

object to which all their instructions may ultimately tend.'

"Pr'ythee, child, a truce to your preaching," interrupted Mr. Herbert, with peevishness; "it might be in character at the *rectory* perhaps, but it is *here* quite out of place. I neither mean my son for a puritan, nor my girl for a devotee. If, indeed," added he, with a sneer, "you are desirous to try an experiment of *nursery education*, and wish to unite the characters of *saint* and *school-mistress*, let me recommend your *adopted child* to your attention. I doubt not *she* will do credit to your system, and prove as *wise* and as *accomplished* as her instructress. Let me, however, hear no more objections to my plan with respect to Edmund and Matilda—that is resolved on, and you have only to prepare for their journey."

Under every occurrence which interrupted her own happiness only, Mrs.

Herbert had ever evinced an heroical firmness and Christian fortitude that prevented all complaint; but in the present instance, when the welfare and interest of her children were so deeply concerned, she felt it her duty still to expostulate and intreat. But Herbert's heart was steeled against every solicitation; opposition seemed rather to confirm than alter his opinion, and he at length tore himself indignantly from her, after expressing in the sharpest terms that his determination was now not to be recalled.

It would be difficult to describe the state of Mrs. Herbert's mind in the interval between this conversation and the day of the children's departure. As yet she had never been separated from them. She had contemplated with rapture the gradual expansion of their intellect; she had marked with all a mother's joy, the features of excellence which their dispo-



sitions displayed, and had found her highest gratification in the cultivation of their minds, and the improvement of their hearts. They were now to be placed in the hands of strangers, cold to their interests, and careless of their welfare; where the principles she had so carefully implanted in them, would be allowed to wither away; the sentiments of piety she had so assiduously infused into their minds, be neglected, and notions of the most pernicious tendency, probably, be ingrafted in their place.

As the moment of separation drew near, the acuteness of Mrs. Herbert's sufferings increased; but though almost borne down with sorrow, she did not neglect the only duty which now remained, that of guarding her children against the dangers to which they were to be exposed, by repeating most solemnly and feelingly the lessons of virtue she had before taught them, and

endeavouring to strengthen their good impressions, with every argument which maternal affection, combined with good sense and piety, could suggest.

The distress of the children on this separation was little less poignant than that of their excellent mother. When the dreaded moment of Edmund and Matilda's departure arrived, the little heart of Mary overflowed with grief, and she could scarcely articulate a last adieu, and express her hope that her companions would not forget her for any new friends. Matilda hung upon her mother's neck, and bathed it with tears; while she pressed Mary's hand, unable to return any answer to the sobbing child. Edmund strove to conceal his sorrow, and hastily brushed the tears from off his burning cheek. His little bosom, however, swelled with emotion; he gasped for breath as he embraced his mother; and when he received a sum-

mons to follow his father to the carriage, he again clasped his arms round the neck of his foster-sister, and burst into a passionate flood of tears.

Never before had Mrs. Herbert sustained so severe a shock to her feelings as on the present occasion; and she would have found more difficulty in supporting herself under so severe a trial, and in restoring her mind to any degree of tranquillity, had she not been aided by the affectionate exertions of Mary, whose principal study it was to divert her thoughts from the subject of their mutual grief, and to supply the loss she had sustained in the departure of Edmund and Matilda, by redoubling her own attentions to her revered benefactress.

Penetrated by the behaviour of the little girl, Mrs. Herbert determined to improve the hint dropped by her husband, and pursue the system she had formed, in the education of her pro-

tegee. To this purpose she immediately devoted a large portion of her time, and soon had the pleasure of perceiving, that the richest harvest of ripening virtue, was likely to crown the success of her labours.

Mary, though yet unable justly to appreciate the extent of her obligations to Mrs. Herbert, became daily more gratefully attached to her preceptress, and more solicitous of contributing to her pleasure. *This* was the stimulus to all her exertions, the secret spring of that ardour with which she applied to every branch of instruction pointed out to her, and of that alacrity with which she adopted every step suggested by her protectress. *This* enabled her quickly to surmount every difficulty that occurred in the progress of her education, and produced a rapid improvement that afforded Mrs. Herbert the purest delight, and which, at the time of Henry's arri-

val, had rendered little Mary as much an object of admiration as of general interest.

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## CHAPTER VI.

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**A**LTHOUGH Mrs. Herbert had clothed her narrative in as few words as possible, suppressing as well as she was able, some of the most offensive particulars of her husband's behaviour, yet sufficient had transpired during the recital, to convince her brother she had been a great and undeserving sufferer.

It was with difficulty he could suppress the different feelings by which he was agitated. His cheek now glowed with indignation; he now started with apprehension, and again melted with grief.

When his sister had concluded her recital, "you have not suffered alone, unhappy Caroline," said he, grasping her hand. "Anguish, bitter anguish, has been the portion of your brother also! *To-morrow* I will relate my tale of woe. Yes, memory shall once more travel over the scenes of past affliction; she shall once more also catch a glimpse of that transient joy, which cheated my dark fate with a momentary illumination, and then left me to eternal darkness. My wounds must bleed afresh; but a sister's sympathy will drop a healing balm upon them! Oh, that I too could soothe my sorrows with my tears; but, alas! their burning fountains have long been dry."

It was not without impatience that Mrs. Herbert looked forward to the gratification of a curiosity, which had long been the restless, though secret tenant of her bosom; but it was an impatience mingled with apprehension.

She dreaded the effect which the recurrence of afflictive images might produce on Henry's weakened mind. She was fully aware of his exquisite sensibility, and already had occasion for alarm; in the starts of passion and symptoms of mental tumult which she observed to have been excited in him by any painful associations, however accidental.

They were scarcely seated at breakfast, however, on the ensuing morning, when Henry began as follows.

“ I need not recal to your remembrance, my dear Caroline, the vexations and sufferings we were both doomed to experience, even from our earliest years, in consequence of the tyrannical disposition and malignant heart of that detestable monster, whom the bonds of consanguinity have made our brother. Nor need I pain your bosom by reminding you of the deep sorrow which we felt, when death deprived us of our inesti-



mable mother; or of our keen mortification, when we discovered that by this event we were rendered dependant on the unfeeling and imperious Charles.

“To me, however, this latter circumstance was attended with causes of chagrin, which you most happily did not experience; causes that aggravated beyond endurance a situation in itself sufficiently irksome, and rendered my proud heart still more exquisitely sensible of its misery and cruelty.

“You probably recollect, that Charles and myself were in France, when our father’s sudden death occasioned our recal to England. I confess that I experienced more pain and vexation at the news, from the loss of what it obliged me to quit, than from the event of a parent’s dissolution, who had never won my regard by kindness or parental love.

“The summons to England tore me, Caroline, from the object on whom the

affections of my soul were now unalterably fixed. Charles and myself had been introduced to the Marquis de Bourdon, a nobleman of high descent and considerable fortune; and possessing a large share of that pride of birth, caprice, and insolence, with which prosperity too often fills the mind. *Adelaide* was his only acknowledged child, (though he was said to have a natural daughter consigned to a convent,) a girl of sixteen, lovely as an angel, but still more interesting to the bosom of sentiment, from the gentleness of her manners, the sweetness of her disposition, the delicacy of her feeling, and the purity of her taste. Her mother had been an Englishwoman and a Protestant, and devoted as much of her time as a declining state of health would permit, to the cultivation and improvement of her daughter's mind, whose progressive excellence had more than satisfied her utmost wish.

“ The Marquis’s connection with England through this lady had given him a prepossession in favour of our nation, and rendered him very accessible to the countrymen of his wife.

“ Charles and myself, therefore, were much at his chateau; and as his family pride was flattered by the intercourse of descendants from the *Norman line*, (as he expressed it,) we received from him every marked and polite attention. But his hospitality proved fatal to my peace. At each successive visit, I found the charming Adelaide become more and more interesting, and her image still deeper impressed upon my soul.

“ Yes, Caroline, I soon discovered that I had yielded up my heart to the daughter of De Bourdon; and that on her alone my happiness depended! But oh! what terms can convey to you an adequate idea of my rapture, when I perceived, that *I* too was not indifferent

to the lovely girl ! In what dreams of felicity did my soul indulge, when, from the suffused cheek, the trembling hand, and the embarrassed manner of my Adelaide, I caught the delightful hope that her heart was mine ! With what unutterable joy did I hear the delicate confession of attachment breathed from her ruby lips ! What moments of ecstasy did I experience, when my active fancy, buoyed up by the ardour of youthful inexperience, represented me as possessed of independence, and openly soliciting that hand, which cruel circumstances prevented me from demanding at present from her haughty parent ! Oh, wretched Henry ! *how* have your anticipations been realized ! Oh, how dark has been the cloud which succeeded to this transient halcyon of the soul !

“ I continued under these delusive impressions for some weeks, till they were at length suddenly dissipated in

a manner equally unexpected and overwhelming.

“ I had one day been expressing myself with some ardour to my brother in praise of her, whose image was ever present to my imagination ; when, in answer to my question, “ whether he did not think her lovely as an angel ? ” ‘ Faith, Henry,’ replied he, ‘ if her *beauty* were unaccompanied by any other attraction, it would not, in my opinion, be altogether irresistible ; but, sole heiress as she is to the Marquis de Bourdon, and her more affluent uncle the Count de Peucé, *that* circumstance I confess lends to the pretty Adelaide a charm, which renders her an object of some attraction. However,’ continued he with a significant sneer, ‘ *your* thoughts need not be occupied on the subject ; for believe me, Henry, she is not within the reach of a *younger brother*. ’

“ You will readily imagine, my dear Caroline, that my indignation was roused by this mortifying and sarcastic speech. I made, however, no reply; for alarm predominated over anger, and I instantly inferred from his words *something* ominous to my hopes, though the nature and degree of the danger did not immediately present itself to my mind. Alas! little did I imagine that my worst of fears would be more than realized.

“ From the moment of this short conversation, the sorrows of my fate commenced. I immediately perceived a change in the Marquis's behaviour. He who had been hitherto all confidence and kindness to me, was now distant and formal. Adelaide too was seldom seen but at meals; and when my eyes were blessed with her presence, the marked attentions which my brother paid to her, and the warmth with which those

attentions were seconded by her father, harrowed up my soul.

“ It is true, indeed, I had no reason to fear that the ardour of the one, or the encouragement of the other, would produce any change in the sentiments of Adelaide to my disadvantage. Of her affections I was secure ; but at the same time I could not but foresee that these circumstances would raise such insurmountable bars to the accomplishment of that event, which my soul had with so much rapture anticipated, an union with the lovely daughter of De Bourdon, as must give a mortal blow to every hope I had hitherto entertained on that head.

“ Whilst affairs were thus circumstanced, our summons for England arrived, and such was the vigilance with which Adelaide was watched by the Marquis, that I had only a momentary opportunity before we separated, of breathing into

her ear a vow of eternal constancy and undiminished affection.

“ You are sufficiently acquainted, Caroline, with the events of several succeeding months; with the imperious behaviour of our unnatural brother, on his succeeding to the fortune and title of my father; and of the thousand methods by which he made us feel the dependent situation in which we were placed; with the gradual decline and melancholy end of our invaluable mother, which robbed us of our only remaining friend; and with the subsequent intolerable conduct of Charles; a conduct that drove me at length to seek for that independence in a foreign country, which his cruelty and parsimony denied me in my own.

“ You may also recollect, Caroline, the sorrows of that morning of our separation from each other, when, having procured a pair of colours in the ———



regiment, I left Fitzmordaunt-castle to embark, as you thought, for India, where I had received orders to join my corps.

“ Alas! my sister, why did I then conceal from you the secret of my bosom? Why did I withhold from the tried friend of my heart the story of my love, and the silent intention which occupied my thoughts? Ah! how many sorrows might such a disclosure have prevented! Comforted by your gentle spirit, persuaded by your controuling mildness, and checked by your better judgment, I might have curbed the violence of my own passions, the wayward dictates of my own frantic will; and instead of plunging into ruin myself, and (oh, horrid thought!) one infinitely dearer to me than myself, instead of being the wretched victim of of agony and despair, I might now have been blessed with hope, and Adelaide,

*my murdered wife!* be still alive! Oh, my bursting heart and staggering brain."

The emotions of Henry were for a while too violent to allow him to proceed. For some minutes he sat in silent anguish, but at length recovering himself, he continued—

"It had been my determination from the moment of getting my appointment, not to quit Europe without seeing the daughter of De Bourdon; and I resolved to leave Fitzmordaunt-castle (under the pretence of the fleet's sailing) some weeks before it was absolutely necessary for me to be at Plymouth, that I might execute a plan, which I fondly supposed would effectually prevent a disappointment of my wishes in *that* quarter where I could least brook their being crossed.

"Having therefore bade you adieu, I instantly embarked for France from Southampton, and proceeded without delay to the chateau of De Bourdon.

“ With the assistance of an ecclesiastic, the confessor of the Marquis, whom I had before bound to my interest by an important pecuniary obligation, and who felt all the affection of a father for Adelaide, I speedily obtained one short interview with the mistress of my affections.

“ It was a moment of mingled torture and ecstasy; and during the tempest of passions which raged in my bosom,—oh, Caroline, how shall I excuse my rashness, or extenuate my folly?—the scruples and objections of Adelaide to a clandestine union were overcome by my impetuosity, and before I bade her adieu, our hands were joined in wedlock by the priest who had enabled us to meet.

“ Through him too it was agreed that we should occasionally correspond; and when I returned from India, which I vainly fancied a few years would enable me to do with rank and competence,

the same good friend was to pave the way with the Marquis for our forgiveness and reconciliation.

“ But let me hasten to the sequel of my story.

“ During the first few months of my service in India, I heard with due regularity from my wife, and your letters, my dear Caroline, were more than once a cordial to my bosom; but being sent far into the interior of the country with a detachment, as a check upon a rajah of suspicious fidelity, a year elapsed before further correspondence reached our quarters.

“ Letters at length arrived at the army; but ah! who can tell the anguish of my bosom, when I learned that there were *none for me?* Fancy, always most busied when adding to the sorrows of the wretched, painted a thousand fears and horrors to my mind, and determined me to throw up all my prospects where

I was, and instantly embark for Europe in search of my beloved wife.

“ With my customary rashness, I immediately disposed of my captain’s commission, (for disease and warfare had already raised me to a company,) vested the money in a house at Calcutta, put myself on board of a returning India-man, and sailed to the Cape; where meeting with an American vessel, bound for —— in France, I took a passage in her, and in a few weeks was landed at a fishing-town, not twenty miles distant from the castle of De Bourdon.

“ Caroline, you know your brother’s wild tumultuous heart, the power of his passions, the ardour of his soul! Think then what must have been his mixed emotions, his alternate hopes and fears, his ecstasy and agitation, when he found himself so near his heart’s best treasure!

“ By night I had reached the dwelling of Father Albert, the friendly priest who had united me to Adelaide. He pressed me to his bosom with the tenderest affection, and welcomed me as one alive from the dead.

“ From him I learned, that Adelaide was well; though sad and disconsolate at the uncertain fate of her husband, from whom no tidings had arrived for twelve long months.

“ He also told me, that her distress had been increased, and her feelings still more harassed by the importunate addresses of my brother, who urged his suit with all the overbearing vehemence natural to his character, in which he was seconded by the threats of the Marquis to immure his daughter in a convent, unless she complied with the wishes of the baronet.

“ He described to me, with all the feeling of tender sympathy, the anguish

and distraction of my beloved wife, who was alternately agonized by fears for my safety, and tortured with the solicitations of my brother, and the menaces of her father ; and concluded his narrative by urging *flight*, as the only means of saving her from one or other of these horrible fates ; promising at the same time to aid with his advice and assistance my plans for this purpose.

“ You must imagine, my dear sister, for I cannot describe them, the joys of that meeting, which, through Father Albert, now took place between your Henry and his Adelaide. They were joys too exquisite to be permanent. Ah ! why did I survive the happy moment ?

“ Let it suffice to say, that we folded to our bosoms all that each best loved ! Adelaide forgot her sufferings, and I remembered not the dangers to which she had been exposed.

Reflection however at length returned, and pointed out the necessity of adopting some measures to avert the heavy cloud of destruction which still threatened to burst upon our future prospects.

“ Ample time, indeed, was allowed for our deliberations, business of an important nature having summoned the Marquis to Paris, from whence he was not expected to return for several weeks. Alas! the very circumstance which was most propitious to our views, by my unpardonable folly and neglect, became our ruin!

“ Satisfied with the constant society of Adelaide, which the friendship of the confessor, and the absence of her father, enabled me to enjoy, my time passed on in dreams of bliss, and I suffered nearly three months to elapse without taking measures for an escape.

“ At length, however, I was awakened from my delirium by the stunning intel-



ligence, that an *avant courier* had arrived at the château, announcing the return of the Marquis on the ensuing evening, accompanied by Sir Charles Fitzmordaunt.

“ Though almost petrified by the news, I took instant means to accelerate our flight; and in a few hours every thing was arranged for the purpose.

“ An Englishman of the name of Vincent, whom I had discovered and befriended in great distress, at the village where I lay concealed, and who seemed to possess every recommendation which honesty, simplicity, and gratitude could offer in his favour, had appeared to me to be a proper person to engage as an assistant in my meditated undertaking. I had for some weeks therefore taken him into my service, and after, as I thought, proving his fidelity, had madly entrusted him with my secret.

“ Yes, Caroline ! fool, maniac that I was, I put myself, my wife, my all, into the power of a villain.

“ By means of this man I engaged a vessel to sail with us that night, to ———, on the southern coast of England ; where I purposed to remain for a short time, till our nuptials should again be solemnized according to the rites of the English Church, and I had found a sequestered retreat for my Adelaide, who now promised to engage me still more closely to her love by making me a *father*.

“ In this seclusion, I fondly purposed to deposit my invaluable treasure, whilst I used every means in my power to reconcile the haughty Marquis to our union ; and in case my efforts failed of success, to return to my beloved, and spend my life with her in humble content, on a small farm, which the pur-

chase-money of my commission might enable me to settle in.

“ Every previous arrangement, as I observed, for our departure being made, we now only waited for Vincent, who was to take the small trunk which contained the jewels and wearing-apparel of my wife.

“ A considerable time elapsed before his arrival, during which we laboured under the most painful suspense; a suspense but too ominous of the woes that were to follow.

“ He came however, at last, and satisfied me for his delay by a plausible excuse. Little did I imagine the real cause of it. Bloodhound! he was then laying the train for our destruction.

“ After having taken an affectionate farewell of Father Albert, we reached the little port where the vessel lay, in safety; and though Vincent was urgent in his remonstrances against our embark-

ing immediately, under pretence that the situation of my wife rendered a short repose after our rapid journey highly necessary; yet feeling anxious to quit the land of danger, she strongly objected to remain longer on the hated shore; we therefore instantly embarked, hoisted our sails, and before the morrow noon, were safely anchored in the harbour of ———.

“ Agitation, apprehension, and fatigue, had so affected the constitution of Adelaide, that I deemed it indispensably necessary to settle her as speedily as possible in some quiet retreat, where her mind and spirits might gradually recover their customary tranquillity; an effect not likely to be produced by the noise and confusion of a large maritime town.

“ I therefore dispatched Vincent, in whom I placed unbounded confidence, in search of an asylum of this description; directing him, (as he was fully

apprized of our views) to take such lodgings as might suit us, arrange every thing for our reception, and return to conduct us to the spot.

“ Ten days had elapsed, before my messenger came back; and however extraordinary such a lengthened absence was in reality, yet to me his awkward reasons for it were sufficiently cogent, for I had passed the hours in Adelaide's society, and was insensible of the number that had flown. Ah, days of bliss, how dearly were ye purchased! how soon did ye expire!

“ Vincent's description of the retirement which he had secured for us, a neat farm-house in the heart of the New-Forest, delighted our imagination, and impatient to be settled in it, we determined to proceed thither without delay.

“ But this sudden journey would not have tallied with the dire machinations, which, I have since discovered, the in-

fernal Vincent had been weaving for our destruction; he therefore contrived to defer our departure till late in the afternoon of the following day.

“ At length we set out, and bade a cheerful farewell to the noisy scene of maritime bustle in which we had been so long confined.

“ The evening was clear and tranquil, a sweet serenity and solemn silence were diffused over all the face of nature, which breathed into our souls a soft and pleasing melancholy.

“ The pains of absence which we had felt, the alarms we had experienced, and the dangers we had escaped, formed the interesting topics of our conversation, and awakened in our minds a succession of tender emotions.

“ The tear of recollected suffering rolled softly down the cheek of Adelaide, and a deep sigh burst from her heaving breast. ‘ Be calmed, my love,’ said I,

whilst I gently pressed her to my heart, ‘nor let a painful thought obtrude upon our present bliss. Fortune has done her worst, henceforth our destiny’s secure; nor will she deign to frown on those, whose lot is happily below her notice!’

“ ‘Stop!’ exclaimed a voice in a tremendous tone; and in the same moment our chaise was surrounded by several horsemen, with vizors on their faces, who rushed from an adjoining wood.

“ Adelaide shrieked, and fell lifeless on my bosom; whilst I, concluding that we were beset by highwaymen, mechanically seized a pistol from the case with my right hand, (supporting my wife on my other arm,) and snapped it at the head of one of the ruffians, who had now opened the door of the chaise.

“ ‘What,’ exclaimed a voice from behind, whose hollow sound I knew to be Fitzmordaunt’s, ‘wilt thou, monster, add *murder* to thy crimes? Wilt thou

kill the *father*, after having robbed him of his *daughter*?

“To describe my feelings in this dreadful moment, is beyond the reach of language. In an instant my mind comprehended all the horror of my situation. I saw that we were betrayed, pursued, and on the point of being separated for ever.

“A storm of passion raged within my breast; my bosom was on fire, reflection fled, and I could only resolve to part with life rather than be torn from Adelaide. “Villain, she is my wife,” returned I in accents of distraction, and at the same time aimed the butt end of the pistol at another assailant, who had now opened the opposite door, and seized the arm of my senseless angel. The blow felled the miscreant at whom it was directed, struck his vizor from his face, and discovered to my astonished eyes, the countenance of Vincent.



“ Maddened with mingled rage and terror, I grasped him by the throat, and cried, ‘ Hell-hound, thou shalt expiate this treachery.’

“ At this moment a pistol was discharged from the opposite door ; I saw its flash, and heard its report, but saw and heard no more !”

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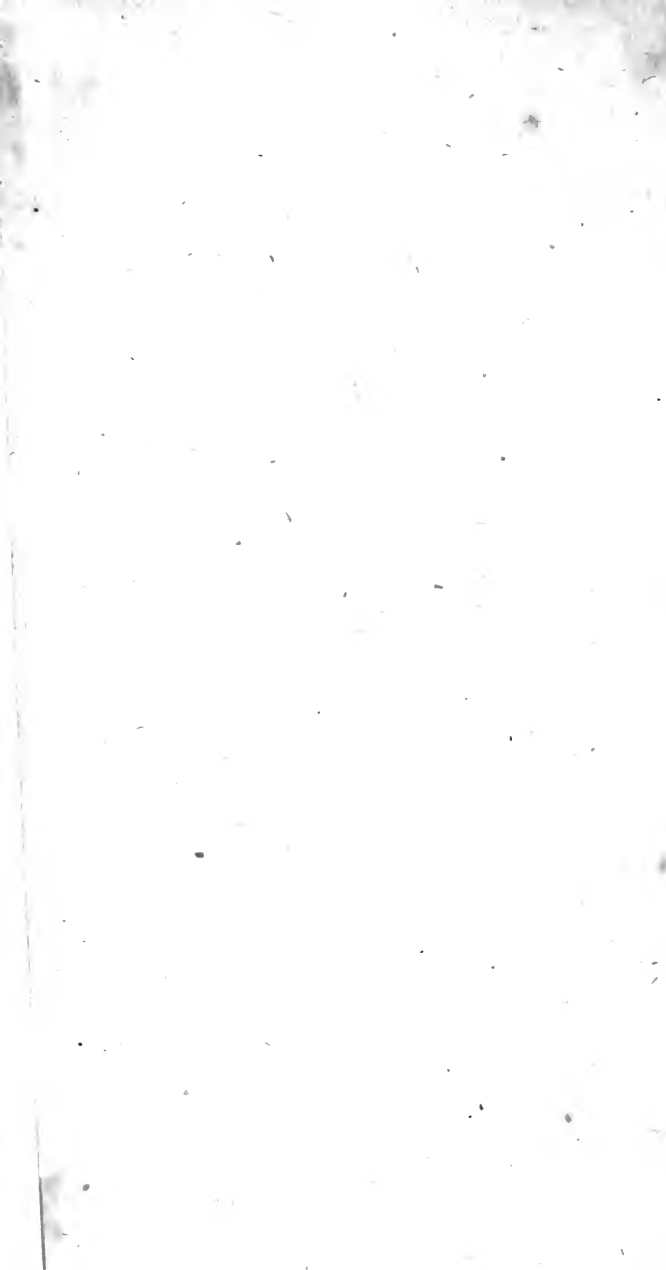
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